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THIS SON OF VULCAN.

A Fable.

BY THE AUTHORS OF 'READY-MONEY MORTIDOU,' 'THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY,' ETC.

PART II.

CHAPTER VIII.



THESE talks with Jack were few. Norah rarely succeeded in getting him quietly to herself. Worse than that, it seemed to her as if from day to day he avoided such evening walks and talks. His face was clouded at times; he would fall into moods of silence, or would retreat to his own room, whither Norah would steal, an hour later, to find him standing idly over his lathe, silent, prepossessed, and melancholy.

'What is it, Jack?' she asked him one night. 'You are changed in the last few days. Tell me what it is. Are you unhappy?'

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'No, Norah. At least, I have no right to be.'

'Are you vexed about the stupid men and their fancies?'

'Not very much—that is, of course I am vexed. It is not pleasant to be scowled at by a mob of angry hands, and to have stones thrown at you after dark. But it is all nothing, Norah. Don't fret about me. Tell me your own news. Are you going to the croquet party to-morrow?'

This was another thing. Ella Bayliss took into her pretty head the fancy that she could not get along without Norah; and her father, who had generally small sympathy with his daughter's fancies, encouraged her. So the girl was asked to all the parties of the Hall, and the young ladies of Esbrough observed, with an exasperation they hardly tried to conceal, that Miss Cuolahan, the daughter of quite a common person, upon whom no one would think of calling, was the chosen friend and associate of the great and fortunate Miss Bayliss. But people did call upon her—'carriage people,' said the Esbrough folk. Captain Perrymont called, as well as Ella Bayliss. At the

Flower Show the Bishop of Bedesbury was observed to single out Miss Cuolahan, and to shake hands with her as an old friend. Norah introduced Miss Bayliss, and presently the right reverend prelate drove off with them in Mr. Bayliss's carriage. And then some of them, taking heart, resolved on calling in person on this friendless princess who knew everybody. Meantime stories were told. People wagged their heads, and said that Miss Cuolahan, who had been brought up by Miss Ferens out of charity, behaved so badly in Bedesbury that she was sent back in disgrace to her father. But there came a call from Miss Ferens herself, who made a railway journey on purpose to remedy that little matter of bedroom furniture mentioned before, and to see that her child was in other respects properly looked after. So great was the public curiosity, that Mrs. Merrion, about whom there was so much division of opinion, found her visitors suddenly multiply tenfold, in the mere hope of finding out something of Norah Cuolahan, whom she was reputed to know.

'They do say,' said Miss Grundy, 'that she was turned out neck and crop.'

'Quite false, my dear Miss Grundy,' said Mrs. Merrion. 'I know the whole particulars. She left Miss Ferens of her own accord, to live with her father.'

'Hum! I expect Mr. Armstrong had something to do with it.'

Mrs. Merrion's eyes shot one look of lightning; but she answered with great sweetness:

'No, my dear, that is not so. Do oblige me, as a friend of the young lady, by contradicting that statement. They are only brother and sister. Mr. Armstrong was adopted by Mr. Cuolahan, a most worthy person, after the sudden

death of his father. No doubt you remember the accident.'

'I was too young at the time,' replied Miss Grundy, who was, indeed, not more than fifty or so. 'But I have heard of it.'

'Yes, Norah Cuolahan is now about eighteen or nineteen. Jack—I mean Mr. Armstrong—is twenty-two, and they regard each other in a fraternal way which is really quite touching.'

'They do say,' pursued the scandalous one, 'that young Mr. Perrymont is in love with her. After the way he and Miss Bayliss have gone on together, I call it disgraceful.'

'I do not know Miss Bayliss,' replied Mrs. Merrion. 'The widow of a general officer, I suppose, is not good enough for the daughter of a blacksmith. She has never called upon me, though I am her father's tenant. Mr. Bayliss has called once or twice. However, that is nothing; only, I do not understand how Miss Bayliss can maintain friendship with a girl who has taken away her lover. And so I prefer to believe that what they say is incorrect. Have you got any more "they say's," for me, dear Miss Grundy?'

'I have heard,' she went on, 'that Mr. Fortescue has been seen calling there, and Captain Perrymont. Now, if that girl, with her fine airs, ventures to set her cap at one of those two, old enough to be her grandfather, and if they are donkeys enough to fall into the trap, they ought to be locked up in a lunatic asylum.'

'I quite agree with you, Miss Grundy,' said Mrs. Merrion. 'Mr. Fortescue is about seventy years of age. What he wants is a well-preserved, single young person of fifty or so. Now don't get up to go—so seldom, too, that you let me see you. But if you must, good-bye, dear Miss Grundy.'

As for Mr. Frank Perrymont, it was no longer a rumour that reached the ears of that common receptacle of all stale rumours, the eldest Miss Grundy; it was notorious to all the town that his attentions to Miss Cuolahan were assiduous. Frank Perrymont. There were those, among the feminine youth of Esbrough, who preferred his slim form and smooth cheeks to the more manly charms, the rosy cheeks, and the Hesperian curls of Jack Armstrong. Frank Perrymont was susceptible. He had held flirtations, generally of brief duration, but long enough to raise wild hopes, with all the girls who had any pretensions to beauty whatever. He was poetical, and had written verses for most of the reigning beauties, which they would sing, till another, more fortunate, produced a copy of more recent date. Frank Perrymont, moreover, the only son of the Captain, was heir to a large fortune, while Jack Armstrong was heir to nothing but his brains. Only the factory girls retained, undivided, their affection for handsome Jack. For to them the gift of divine poesy had no charms, and they loved to look upon a man who was strong, masterful, and handsome.

'Come here, handsome Jack, and we'll give you a kiss.'

The young ladies would hear them as they stepped along the street, and, glancing at the young fellow who strode along with his head thrown proudly back, would secretly lament that the advance of civilisation made such an invitation from themselves out of place.

But Frank Perrymont was clearly in love with Miss Cuolahan.

'Do you see anything in her, my dears?' asked a younger Miss

Grundy of her friends Miss Rose Backbite and Miss Blanche Crabtree.

'She is tall,' said Miss Backbite, who was tall herself.

'So is a May-pole, dear.'

'She has black hair,' said Miss Blanche Crabtree, who believed in Christian names and was swarthy.

'So has a negress, dear.'

'She has bright eyes.'

'So has a poll-parrot, my dear.'

'She has a strong voice.'

'My dear, so has a drill-sergeant.'

'But then her manners.'

'Well, poor thing, what can you expect? Her father collects the rents for Mr. Bayliss. To me, indeed, it is the most incomprehensible thing in nature. Frank Perrymont, of all men in the world.'

And just then passed by Ella Bayliss and Norah Cuolahan, the one, soft, sweet, and gentle, with large, pellucid eyes like a deer, and light flowing hair; the other, tall, queenly, statuesque, noticing the ladies who were discussing her with just one glance of intelligence.

'They are talking about me, Ella,' said Norah. 'They are saying that my father is only a collector.'

'Oh, Norah, don't suspect dreadful things.'

'Why are they dreadful? They are quite welcome to say so, if they please. What they know, poor things, is, that they are jealous and spiteful, and it makes them feel mean and small. Look, dear, what a lovely bonnet!'

Norah had, at least, one weakness: she had the instinct of dress. To dress in bad taste was impossible for her; not to be well dressed was torture. And it was not the least bitterness to the Esbrough girls that this stranger, who had come among them, dressed better than any of them.

'Tell me what you know, dear,' said Ella, 'of Mrs. Merrion.'

'I have dined there. She was kind to Jack. That is all I know about her.'

'Papa goes to see her, dear. Hush! don't tell any one. He calls of an evening, after dark. What does he go there for? Is she pretty?'

'She has been—perhaps is still—with a kind of prettiness. But surely, Ella, you don't think—'

'Never mind what I think, Norah dear. Only I won't have it, if I can help it. Look, here comes Mr. Armstrong with Frank Perrymont.'

They walked down to the sea-shore, where an esplanade now stretched its way from the docks to that creek in which Jack had well-nigh passed through the gates of death. Ella walked with Jack, and Norah behind with Frank Perrymont.

I do not know what the former pair talked about, but when they separated, Ella was silent and cross. Frank Perrymont talked about himself chiefly. He was not yet out of the stage of thinking that every young lady must be deeply interested in his proceedings.

He told Norah how he projected a great poem, at the reading of which the hearts of the people should burn within them; and a great play whereat eyes should weep and bosoms should heave; and small poems for the multitude to sing about the streets, and so on; the fancies of a young fellow who thinks that conception is execution, and that all is easy to him who dares resolve.

'I tell you all this, Miss Cuolahan,' he said, after finishing his programme, 'because I like to think that you take an interest in my work.'

'So I do, Mr. Perrymont, after

a way. I like to find out what men think about, and it is a grand thing to learn that they have noble ambitions. Jack, now, thinks about nothing but his machinery and wheels. But then it is to serve the double purpose of conquering Nature and making people more happy.'

'Yes, but that is nothing compared to the delight of touching people's hearts, and——'

'I think you are quite wrong, Mr. Perrymont,' said Norah, quickly. 'To touch people's hearts—what is it but to waken a momentary sympathy that passes away and is forgotten? That is not the finest art. And even if it were, it does seem to me a miserable thing to pursue art in order to get praise. I went to a gallery of paintings last summer with Miss Ferens, at Lord Overbury's. He had a few of the modern English school, touching little incidents, nicely painted. And away from these was a collection of copies; Raphael's Madonna, with the sweet, grand face that you could never tire of. And I thought of the modern artist standing by his little domestic picture, watching the people cry over the tragedy, and rejoicing in our sympathy. Then I thought of Raphael gazing at his type of womanhood, thinking in his great soul that he might have made it better—not knowing how good it was. The modern art looked so small beside it, Mr. Perrymont.' She turned to her companion, blushing. 'I have been talking to you as if you were Jack, or Miss Ferens.'

'Go on talking,' he murmured, with his dreamy eyes reflecting the light from hers. 'Go on thinking I am Miss Ferens.'

But she stopped.

'No,' she said; 'what I mean is that it seems a poor thing to look

on art as a means of getting praise for yourself. Show me some of your poetry, Mr. Perrymont.'

'Do you really take an interest in—in my verse?'

She hesitated a moment. You see this young lady was quite new in the art of flirtation, and had been used to converse with the old clergymen at Miss Ferens's on quite an equal footing. But she was quick at learning, and it was evident that the young poet wanted to practise the commencements of the Art of Love.

'I do not want particularly to see your verses,' she said coldly. 'If you show me any, I shall give you a candid opinion of them. Of course I do not mean that my opinion is worth anything.'

'It is worth everything to me,' said Frank, in a low voice.

'Well, it is not amusing talking about verses and opinions, Mr. Perrymont, so tell me about something else.'

He began, in a constrained way, to talk about something else. Presently he said, laughing:

'Tell me, Miss Cuolahan, do you know a lady named Merriion who lives near you?'

'Yes—I know her. What of her?'

'What is she like? I find that my father knows her.'

'Your father?' asked Norah, thinking she was in a dream.

'Yes—and—and—I do not know her, personally, and if my father is really going to give me a new mamma, though it's rather late in the day, I should like to know what sort of a one it will be.'

'Jack knows best,' said Norah, laughing. 'He will introduce you if you please.'

'No, thank you. At least, not yet. Will you let me send you some verses, Miss Cuolahan?'

'For my candid criticism?'

Yes, and you may give them to Jack for me, if you please.'

'Let me bring them!'

'Certainly not, Mr. Perrymont. I am only at home to my old friends. You may come with Mr. Fortescue, if you please.'

Norah and Jack walked home together.

'Tell me, Jack,' said Norah, 'do you think that Mrs. Merriion means to marry again?'

Jack coloured violently.

'Why do you ask, Norah?'

'Mr. Bayliss calls there, and Captain Perrymont.'

Jack laughed.

'It would be a good match for her. But no, Norah, Mrs. Merriion will not marry either of them. Of that you may be quite sure.'

'I care nothing about it, Jack, only that I wish you knew less about Mrs. Merriion's intentions. Jack, I won't go there any more. I am unchristian about that woman. I dislike her thoroughly.'

Jack made no reply.

At dinner he was silent and absorbed. After dinner he went out of the room, and presently Norah, with a sharp pain at her heart, saw him go across the road to Mrs. Merriion's. Then she reproached herself. Jack had a perfect right to go wherever he pleased: she had been foolish in telling him her opinion about Mrs. Merriion: no doubt she was wrong—and so on. Reproaches which had the effect of making her only the more disappointed with Jack, and the more angry with herself.

Jack, for his part, did not spend a pleasant evening. He was met in the hall by Mrs. Bastable, flushed, dishevelled, and panting, as from a recent struggle in which she had got the worst of it.

She caught her breath, and smoothed her hair as she opened the door to him. Then she took

his hand in hers and held it a moment, looking at him with those vast eyes of hers, in which there was no speculation save when she was clairvoyante.

'Don't anger her to-night,' she whispered. 'Not as you did the other night. She's awful now.'

Jack shook her off, and strode into the drawing-room. On the hearth-rug stood Mrs. Merrion, in a statuesque attitude, an unstudied pose which violent women, like savages, assume naturally when they are in a rage. Mrs. Merrion was in a towering rage.

'Sit down,' she gasped, 'sit down, you. I shall be able to talk to you presently.'

In a few minutes she came round a little.

'You were in a rage when I saw you last,' said Jack.

'That was with you. Now it's with that idiot, that cow, that—oh, that Keziah Bastable!'

'Ladies ought not to fall into fits of passion,' said Jack. 'Ladies, in fact, do not.'

She started to her feet again, the blood surging into her face.

'How dare you!' she cried; 'how dare you say that I am not a lady?' Seeing that Jack replied not, she went on in a low voice: 'Oh! I see that you are come to quarrel with me again. I know why—I know why. Jack Armstrong, it was all very well to call her your sister. Brother and sister! Pah! the girl loves the ground you tread on. You love the very sound of her voice and the rustle of her dress. But you don't get off so easily; you don't get rid of me!'

'First of all, I shall say what I came to say. I forbid you, Mrs. Merrion, on any pretence whatever, to call upon Miss Cuolahan again.'

'Oh! I am not good enough for her, I suppose.'

'That is it. You are not good enough.'

'What a thing it is to be perfection, like Miss Cuolahan! How grand to have a brother so careful of your virtues, like Miss Cuolahan! And oh! how charming to be kept from wicked people, as Miss Cuolahan is! But what shall we do, Jack, when your promise is kept, and when we are married? Do you deny your promise? See! she took a pocket-book from an open desk. 'Here it is—ah! in black and white, signed and dated. "I promise to marry Adelaide Constance Merrion unless, of her own free will, she gives me back my promise. John Armstrong." Do you dare to deny your promise?'

'No—I do not deny it. But I am not going to marry you yet. Meantime you shall do me as little harm as possible.'

'What harm have I ever done you?'

'This, that you made me sign that paper. Think how you did it. It was on a soft, warm night in autumn, when we sat here in the dark at the open window.'

'I was at your feet, Jack, at your feet,' she added, her eyes sparkling.

'Yes—you had been playing—the scent of the flowers, the perfumes of your dress, your eyes glowing in the twilight, the touch of your hands—I don't know—I was drunk with incense, I think.'

'No, Jack, you were drunk with love, and you leaned forward and took my face in your hands and kissed me. I remember—I remember. And then I threw up my arms and dragged you down, and kissed your handsome face a thousand times. That evening you gave me the paper, because I said that I could not live without your love. Jack!' she cried once more passionately, throwing herself

at his feet again. 'Jack, it is all true—oh! I will do anything, go anywhere, live anyhow, if only you love me!'

'But I do not love you. I have told you so before.'

'Then, if only you let me love you. If I have you, all to myself, what do I care whom else you love! What if you yearn for all the women in the world, if only I hold you tight in my arms! Jack, Jack, I've got your promise, and I'll never let you go. Never—never—not for a thousand Norahs. See, I hold you tight—so tight that you shall never escape.'

She clasped her arms about him and strained him tighter in her embrace. Jack gently pushed her away.

'Your arms make me shudder. What sort of love is yours, if you could endure to marry a man who loves another?'

'I don't care what sort of love it is. I care for nothing. Say what you please, love whom you please. But you are mine, and mine you shall continue to be.'

'How can I be yours?' asked Jack, dragging himself free from her. 'I tell you I love you no longer. I never did love you. I hate you now. I hate you when I think of your rage and passion: and I hate you most when I feel your arms round my neck. Is it possible for two people to marry when one hates the other?'

'Possible!' echoed Mrs. Merrion. 'I could tell you things; but—Jack, don't be angry with me. Is not my only fault that I love you?'

'No.'

'What is it more?'

'It is this: that your thoughts are . . . Why do you make me say such things?'

'You shall not say these things. I will say them for you. You thought me, when first you met

me, one of those spotless creatures whom young men see in place of women. You have learned to know me exactly as I am. I am fond of admiration, and proud of my good looks. I use rouge and powder. I dress myself well—as well as I can afford. I am fond of luxury and comfort, so I have furnished my place as luxuriously as I could. I like good things to eat and drink, so I have delicate French wine and good French cookery. I like to have things pleasant, and to keep them pleasant. I don't mind if the stories I tell are not always accurate. As I am not a saint, I try to find out all about other people, to show that they also are not saints. Yes, Jack, I am a woman who has told you what all women are.'

'They are *not* all like yourself,' said Jack, pacing the room. 'It is false. Where were you brought up? In what miserable school did you learn the lesson that all women are like what they have made you? Tell me, what was your early life, that you have fallen so low?'

Mrs. Merrion laughed.

'My early life? My Jack, I have told you a hundred anecdotes about my early life. Some of them I have even told twice or three times without much alteration, so that they, at least, must be true. All women are like me, only they hide it from you and from each other. But, Jack, all women are not like me in one thing—they are cold-hearted, they are incapable of love. I can give you love for love, warmer than the pale, cold moonlight that your miserable Norah would give you.'

'Silence!' Jack groaned. 'Dare to name that girl to me again, and I will break even my solemn promise. Love!' he echoed; 'always love! And what love? All she knows of love is that it means

kisses and champagne. That is her love! That is her heaven. See here—I must keep my word, but it shall not be yet. There are things to be done first. It depends upon you whether the word is kept to the letter or not.

‘Do not threaten, Jack,’ she replied calmly. ‘You have got to marry me, you know, and that is enough for once. And you are not the only string to my bow. There are others who are not quite so insensible to the attractions of the fair widow.’

‘Yes!’ said Jack. ‘I heard to-day Mr. Bayliss comes here, and Captain Perrymont.’

‘The two kings of Esbrough. They both come. Is it not delightful? Not together, you know, but separately. Is Jack jealous?’

‘No! if I become jealous it will be when I have good cause.’

‘And there is some one else,’ said Mrs. Merriion. ‘Perhaps this will make you jealous. Yesterday I met Mr. Cuolahan, and asked him in. He has a fine eye for a pretty woman, and came at once. Why did you not tell me he is almost presentable? He sat down there and had a cup of tea, and presently began to talk. “The late Mr. Merriion, ma’am,” he says. Mrs. Merriion acted poor Myles’s compliments in the spirit of a finished comedian, so that even Jack, vexed and angry as he was, began to laugh. ““The late Mr. Merriion, ma’am, was a small man, I presume?” “He was,” I said, wiping my eyes. You know, Jack, it’s manners to wipe your eyes when you speak of the late departed. “He was a small man, Mr. Cuolahan.” “Ay—and a thin man?” “Yes, the poor General was a very thin man,” I said. He wasn’t, you know, Jack, but I like to please people always. “I knew it,” said Mr. Cuolahan. “I knew it. It’s always the way. The

little, thin, hatchet-face chaps, with legs like spindles, got all the beautiful women, and the strong, able-bodied poor devils have got to go without. And what’s the use of a leg like that, Mistress Merriion, ma’am, and me a widower and no one to admire it?” I laughed—you know, Jack, my taste in jokes is rather low—and he went on. “Mistress Merriion, ma’am, you’ll pardon me, but it’s many a long year since I saw a creature any way your aquil. It’s ripeness and richness. I did think once that Mrs. Bastable was a fine woman.” “Mr. Cuolahan!” I said; “why, she’s got a face like a cow.” “Hush!” he answered, in a low voice, and creeping to the door cautiously, opened it and peeped out. Then he shut it again and came back, whispering, “Hush! Mistress Merriion, I’ve seen many a handsomer cow.” And then I encouraged him, you know; and when he went away, the impudent rascal had the audacity—Jack, you really must be jealous—he had the audacity to kiss the hands of your future wife. Does that stir you, Mr. Grave-airs? Does that fire your blood?’

Jack laughed, but was too angry still to be calmed by a scene of modern comedy.

‘Come, Jack, you are cross to-night. Go away back to your family prayers. When you want champagne and kisses come to me. I’m of the world—worldly. But I’m better fun than the saints. Good-night—now don’t let us quarrel—my future husband.’

CHAPTER IX.

JACK went home, the most miserable man in Esbrough: it was nearly twelve. As he stood at the door with his latch-key in his

hand, a woman wrapped in a long cloak accosted him.

'Jack Armstrong, they mean mischief. Take care!' she cried, clasping his arm. 'They mean mischief over there,' pointing in the direction of the town.

Jack coolly lifted her chin with his hand in order to look at her.

'I don't know you,' he said. 'Tell me who you are, and what mischief is meant.'

'What does it matter who I am? I'm one of the hands: it's the iron-works people that mean you mischief; I was there to-night, and heard them. They'll attack you to-morrow. Jack, be careful! Get Hodder to go about with you. Tell Mr. Bayliss. Have the police out. The men are maddened by that chap—him with the long tongue, who tells them lies and cheats their senses. He has persuaded them that you are going to turn them out of place. Jack, don't be in the way to-morrow!'

'Who are you, then?'

'Look at me, and you won't know me. If I tell you my name it's no use to you, because you wouldn't know it. But I like you, Jack. If I was ten years younger, I should love you; and there's many a girl in Esbrough this night, high and low, from Ella Bayliss in her silks and satins, to Polly in her greasy factory petticoat, as 'ud up and follow you, through better, through worse, if you only lifted your little finger. And I'm Esbrough born, and know about the Armstrongs. But I'm not in love with you. I'm better than that—I'm grateful to you. Jack, I've got one boy—only one, thank God! and you saved his life for him. I can't call you Mr. Armstrong; you're only Jack to me—my beautiful Jack; and you saved my boy's life in the cruel engine-room, and mine I'd lay down for you this minute.'

She took his hand in hers, and kissed it. He gently drew back, and laughed.

'My good woman, you exaggerate a little service. Now I know your name, and the name of your boy.'

'He is a man now. He is sixteen; and he has forgotten what you did for him. He will be among the worst to-morrow. Ah! his mother remembers. But I've warned you, sir. And oh! take care—take care!'

'I'll take care. Good-night,' said Jack, letting himself in.

She disappeared in the darkened street, and Jack went up to his room.

Next day he went to his work as if nothing was about to happen. As he walked about the engine-rooms and through the foundry, the men shrank back from him, right and left, as from a leprous man. His blood mounted to his cheek; he held his head higher, but he said nothing.

One of the boys in his department came sidling up to him—all the boys were fond of him—and whispered, 'Mr. Armstrong, don't go out at the great gates to-night. Go by the back way. The hands are going to murder you.'

'Thank you, my little chap, for nothing,' said Jack; and then, repentant for a word that might seem rough, stopped and stroked the boy's curly head. The little fellow looked up at him sadly, and went his way, half crying.

Mr. Bayliss himself, that day, went round the works. It was no sauntering that he affected, like Captain Perrymont, as he was wont to say. Mr. Bayliss went the rounds as one who knew how things ought to be. He superintended everybody, from an overseer to an engine-boy, knowing exactly what every man's work ought to be. And he bullied all impartially,

except Mr. Armstrong. On this occasion he had half an hour's talk with Jack in the open yard, at which the men looked askance. After this they both visited the engine-room together, and Hodder, the foreman, was called in. And when Mr. Bayliss walked away, it was, men said to each other, with a joyful countenance, as of one who has learned something to his advantage. Something to their employer's advantage, the men inferred, was something to their own disadvantage. It seems an odd result of civilisation, but this undoubtedly was the feeling in Mr. Bayliss's works.

As a matter of fact, there was nothing new, and no jubilant expression on the master's face. What had passed was extremely simple. No reference was made to Jack's invention at all, and the only question about the men was simply:

'Any more stones, Armstrong? Any more pistol-shots?'

'No more, at present.'

'Good. Hodder, remember what I told you. The first man who attempts violence goes—goes at once—and goes to prison. As for that orator fellow you told me of, I look to you to bring him into my clutches for conspiracy, or inciting to break an Act—never mind what Act—and then I'll make an example of him.'

It was six o'clock when Jack left the works, a few minutes after the bell rang for dismissal. Just as he was putting on his coat he was joined by Myles Cuolahan.

'I was passing by, me boy,' said the collector of rents, 'and I thought it was a month since I walked home with you. Let's come along together and talk of Norah.'

The sole delight of Myles, in fact, was to talk of Norah.

'There's all the boys,' meaning the hands, 'gathered about the gate to-night, Jack, talkin' and blatherin'. Is there anything wrong with the hands?'

'I suppose they think there is,' said Jack. 'Now, Myles, I am ready.'

Just before they reached the gate he turned to his companion, and looked at him for a moment.

'Myles, we are in for a row. The men think I have made some improvement in machinery which will drive a lot of them out of work. It is not true, but they think so. For Norah's sake, keep yourself out of it.'

'I will, Jack; I will,' said Myles, grasping his trusty stick.

'I'll keep myself out of it, be-dad, and I'll put him into it. Holy saints! It's nigh upon ten years since I had a fight. Shall we begin it, Jack, or shall we wait for him?'

'For God's sake don't begin it. I am glad to have you with me, Myles. They shall not say I am afraid.'

They passed through the gates. The last stroke of the bell clanged as they left the works, and the heavy gates were shut after them. There was a small side gate also, generally closed, and never used by the hands.

As a rule, the men went straight away home, where they 'fettled up,' had tea and a smoke, and then went out again to their clubs and taverns. On this occasion they were assembled together outside the gates in knots and circles, talking, gesticulating, and swearing. Among them ran and leaped the boys; and these seemed to be the worst of all, so eager were they for the row to begin, so brutally anxious for the fight, so callous, and so cowardly. There were four hundred men outside those gates. They meant mischief: they meant

revenge: they meant, though they would not whisper it to each other, they meant Murder. The older men were the most quiet. They looked at each other sadly, as if they were sorry for the business. But the young men had no such thought. They thought of the weekly wage; they panted to be revenged upon the man who was going to turn them out. There was a quick and feverish movement in the crowd: occasionally a stone would fly through the air, earnest and promise that some one should be hurt. And there was a hollow and hungry roar. None of the men had lit their pipes. That was a bad sign. None of them was striking off homewards. That was another bad sign.

'Begorra, Jack,' said Myles, as he caught sight of the mob, 'tis worse than Donnybrook. A great fight we shall have, entirely.'

At sight of Jack the roar changed to a yell, and in a moment they closed round him, shaking angry fists in his face and shouting menaces. He, a little paler, threw back his head proudly and faced them all, one hand on Myles's shoulder to keep him back.

'What is it, lads?' he shouted, above the din. 'What is it I have done to you all?'

'You've ruined us, Jack Armstrong, cried one to whom the rest seemed to leave the post of spokesman—a serious, grey-headed man. 'You've ruined us with your engines and your books.'

'How have I ruined you?' asked Jack.

'You've made some at as will turn us out—ay, every man of us, into the street. You, that's a gentleman by birth, as all the world knows, and an Armstrong of Esbrough—you to come among the hands and steal away their bread—shame on you, Jack Armstrong! Shame upon ye!'

'We haven't done with you yet, fine Jack Armstrong,' cried a voice from the crowd.

'Listen to me a moment,' cried Jack.

Myles pushed himself to the front.

'Stand back, all of you,' he roared, pushing them from him to clear a space. 'Stand back, and give a man fair play. You Englishmen? I'll fight the best man among you. Come.'

He brandished his great fist, but Jack seized him by the arm, and held him back.

'We will have no fighting, Myles. Leave me to speak. Who is it has told you lies?' he shouted. 'Where is the man that has made speeches against me, and told you that I meant to ruin you all? He is a liar! Bring him here, that I may tell him so to his face.'

There was a stir in the crowd. Esbrough men love not strangers.

'I have heard of him. He has been among you for a month, and you believe him against me, who have been five years working among you, and one of you.'

'You don't drink with us, lad,' said the spokesman, shaking his head solemnly.

'No, I don't drink with you, and I won't drink with you, and you know why. But I work for you. If I invent a machine that shall lessen your labour while it shall require as many hands, is that a mischief? If I make your hours easier, your work lighter, your wages heavier, is that a mischief?'

'Leave us as we are, Jack Armstrong—leave us as we are.'

'Yes; leave you as you are!' he cried, losing his patience. 'Leave you as you are—to spend your hard-earned wages in the pot-house, to have no pleasure but drink, to labour like slaves your twelve hours a day, to grow up in

ignorance and die in ignorance, to have no thrift, no care for the future, no hope, no brightness in all your life. Men, you only have one life in this world. Leave you as you are? No; I will not!

For a moment only the men were silent. Then some one, probably a boy, began to hoot and cry, and the tumult began again, louder than ever. The hands were there for a row—were they to be balked of their prey by a few fair words? They were there to give vent, in an act of violence, to the suspicions and jealousies which had been growing so long—were they to resign their just and righteous revenge for a few promises? Stones began to fly about. Then they closed in. Myles, in front of Jack, tried to clear the way, but in vain. The crowd pressed closer. The threatening faces threatened more determinedly. Jack found himself with his back against the wall; in front of him Myles, gesticulating and defiant—a wild scene which neither will forget for a lifetime. Sticks were brandished in Jack's face: faces, red with an aimless rage, glared in his eyes, and exploded with oaths, less dreadful to a mechanical engineer than to a lady: the boys yelled and danced; and outside the crowd stood a man, leaning on a stick, with fierce and bloodshot eyes, his head trembling, his lips trembling, his cheek twitching, his hands trembling, in his eagerness to see the fight begin. And when Jack saw this man, there flashed across his brain the thought, for a moment, that he had seen him before—somewhere before.

Where a French mob beats an English mob is, that there is always some Frenchman ready to begin; very seldom an Englishman.

This fact saved Jack's life. His

safety was assured by a second event.

The heavy gates behind them swung open, and the crowd reeled back, for before them stood—a girl. Alone, save for Hodder, the foreman, who had opened the gates for her.

'It's Norah Cuolahan,' cried one or two voices, and all were still while a man might count ten.

There was nothing theatrical in her attitude as she stood facing them all, wrapped in her light jacket and morning dress, with the hat in which, for Norah loved bright colours, stood a scarlet feather. In her hand was no weapon, but in her eyes was an infinite scorn; and as she moved towards her father and Jack, the men fell back right and left, and left the path clear.

Myles sprang to his feet as they retreated. His coat was torn, his face was bleeding. He dragged the rags from off his back and fairly danced, the spirit of a hundred fights within him, as he shouted, 'Come an! Come an! I'll fight the biggest of ye. Who fears to talk of Ninety-eight? Who'll fight Myles Cuolahan? Come an!'

A light hand touched his arm.

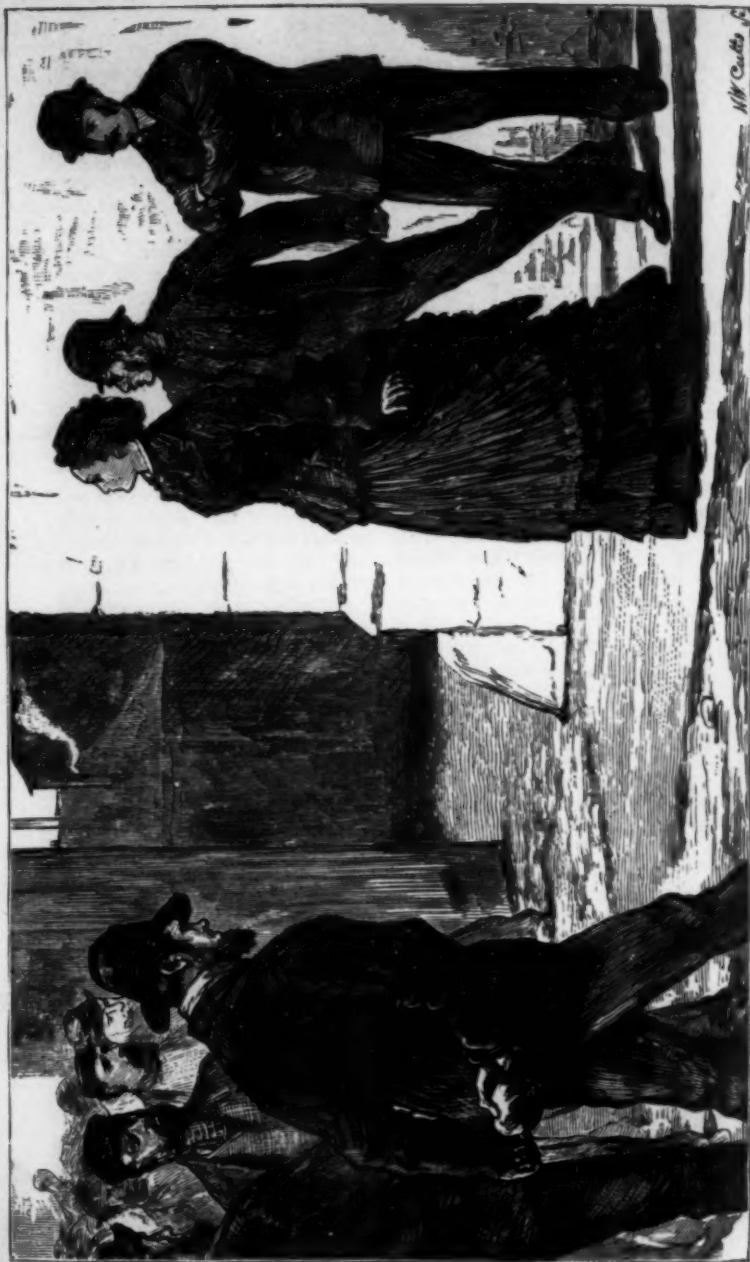
'Father, we will have no more fighting.'

The stones had not ceased flying through the air. Jack's face was cut and bleeding. He still stood, his back against the wall, silent, pale, and resolved. It seemed as if he did not see the girl. Myles dropped his fists and spread out his hands, and Norah turned to Jack.

'You here, Norah!' he cried. 'Quick, get back through the gates, and take your father with you.'

'And you, Jack?'

'Let them kill me. Let them



Drawn by J. Nash.

'THIS SON OF VULCAN.'
'Before them stood—a girl.'

do their worst. Do you think that I will run away? Ha! Cowards, cowards, who threw that stone?

For one, aimed at him, struck the girl full upon the mouth, and her lips were bleeding. Jack sprang like a madman upon the mob, followed by Myles. But, at sight of the girl bleeding before them all, a revulsion of feeling seized them, and there was a cry of shame and the silence of a sudden repentance.

Norah stanchd the blood from her cut lip, and faced the crowd with a bearing that had no more fear than that of Jack or her father.

'She's a plucked 'un,' they murmured.

'Englishmen!' she cried, 'you dare to call yourselves Englishmen! You set four hundred together upon two unarmed men! Go home to your wives. Tell them that it takes four hundred hands to fight two men. Go to your public-houses. Tell the landlords that their drink has taken the manliness out of you, and that you must be two hundred to one before you dare attack a man. Now clear the way, cowards, and let us pass.'

'Go back through the gates,' said Hodder. 'Go back, while there's time.'

'Ay! go back through the gates,' said one of the foremost. 'The men behind are mad.'

'I shall not go back through the gates,' shouted Jack. 'Make way for me. I shall pass on my way among you all.'

The murmurs began again.

'Bring that man here,' cried Hodder, pointing to the stranger, who, on being thus prominently brought into notice, sought refuge in retreat. 'Bring that chap here. He's the man that done the mischief. Bring him along, you men

there. I know you all, and you know me. We've had enough of this.'

Two or three seized the stranger by the arm and led him, reluctant as he was, to the semicircle, backed by the wall, where the little group, with Jack in the centre, stood fenced in by the angry hands.

At sight of the stranger, Myles's face was seized with a puckering. He strode up to the man, peering curiously in his eyes; then he went back again to Jack.

'Faix,' he said, 'it's mighty quare. I know him, and I can't remember him. I've seen him, and I can't tell where.'

Jack looked at him steadily. As he looked, the man's eyes lifted for a moment upon him. In that malignant glance, where all evil passions were mixed, he recognised his old enemy, almost forgotten. And he laughed aloud.

The first spokesman pushed the man forward.

'Now, lad,' he said, 'you've allus been pretty free of your talk about Mr. Armstrong behind his back. Let's hear what you've got to say before his face.'

'It's mighty quare,' repeated Myles, biting his knuckles.

The prospect of a duel in which you can take an outsider's interest is even more delightful to the majority of mankind than the prospect of a free fight, in which heads, your own very likely, will be broken, and much subsequent annoyance caused in the shape of wounds and bruises. The crowd pressed round, no longer to hoot and throw stones at one man, but in the hope of witnessing the fair duello. Beside Jack stood Norah, pale, cool, and determined, with her handkerchief to her bleeding lip; and in front of him, bending forwards, and staring into the newcomer's face, was Myles. Behind the three was Hodder, the foreman.

'Let us all hear,' said Jack, 'what the man has to say.'

'Now then, chap, speak up.'

The 'chap' showed little inclination to speak up.

'I am a stranger here,' he said.

'Begorra, I thought I knew him,' shouted Myles.

'Quiet, Myles, quiet; all in good time,' said Jack. 'I know him too.'

The man turned paler, if possible, and looked uneasily from side to side; but there was no way of escape.

'Speak up, man,' shouted the crowd.

'I came here a stranger,' he began, in an oily voice, 'to inquire into the prospects and condition of the down-trodden English workmen.'

'Don't call names,' said Hodder. 'What have you got to say about Mr. Armstrong?'

'Ay,' said the first spokesman, 'tell us what you said last night; what you've said a dozen nights. What did you hear young Jack Armstrong say?'

'I am coming to that,' said the stranger. 'Being a stranger here, a delegate from the United States to look for men willing to escape from starving to—'

'Yah—yah!' cried the boys.

'Go on with your story, man,' said Hodder; 'and cut it short. What about Armstrong?'

Driven into a corner, the man replied:

'I heard him tell Mr. Bayliss, not once, but twice, that his new invention would send half the hands about their business.'

There was a dead silence, and all looked to Jack.

He moved a step nearer the man.

'It is a lie!' he said. 'Men, you have known me for eight years. I say it is a lie. Which will you believe?'

There was a movement and a murmur.

Jack went on, advancing another step nearer to the man:

'Now, men, I'll tell you another thing. I know this man. He is named Cardiff. The rogues on the road call him Mr. Cardiff. They also call him Captain Cardiff, the king of begging-letter writers. He is a rogue and a thief by trade. When I was a boy ten years old he tried to make me the means of getting his letters believed. By telling the truth I accidentally caused him to be arrested. He tried to murder me for this. It is twelve years ago—and in this very place. There were no ships there then, as you know, and no docks.'

'Let me go,' said Mr. Cardiff, trying to force his way out. 'Let me go!'

'Hold him!' shouted Hodder. 'Hold him fast!'

There was no need to tell them to do that. Stalwart hands were laid upon him, and Mr. Cardiff was turned again to face his enemy.

'I came down to the seaside, through the fields, with Myles Cuolahan, here. I left him to go back to the town. This man caught me. He dragged me across the meadows to a place where there was a little muddy creek.'

'It's Esbrough Docks, now,' cried a voice.

'I know. And he tied me to the wreck of an old barge to drown me while the tide came up. Do you know what that means? Think of it. I was ten years old. Hour after hour he lay on the beach to mock me while the water crept slowly up my body. Then, by a miracle I was saved.'

'It's true!' cried one of the hands, parting the crowd, and rushing into the midst. 'I was in father's boat, me and Bess was

in it, when we see the old wreck come floating by, and the boy tied on to it. It's all true, chaps, every word's true!

The crowd was as silent and still as the air before the breaking of a great storm.

'He returns, after ten years, to poison my name among you. Men, I say again it is a lie. Which do you believe?'

Then Myles pushed Jack aside, and, by a dexterous sweep of his hand, knocked hat, wig, and whiskers, complete, from the head of Mr. Cardiff. He stood revealed, an old man with blurred and blotched features, and a stubbly crop of snow-white hair.

Myles held up his left fist, not in a threatening way, but as one who wishes to call attention to some natural beauty.

'Look at that, man,' he said, pointing to a great scar running from the biggest knuckle down the back of his hand. 'What did that? 'Twas your teeth. Boys, I promised to forgive him when I'd thrashed him. And I left little Jack with Mr. Fortescue, and I had no rest nor peace night nor day till I found him, and I fought him. 'Twas a poor fight when all the hitting was on one side, but when I left off, bedad, I don't think there was a sound inch over his whole body. Ye're a bad lot, Cardiff Jack; and I thought it would be a lesson for you, ye black, murderin', Saxon thief. And what will we do wid him, boys, now we've got him safe and sound, and us all friends again? Shall we duck him? Shall we drown him? Shall we——'

There was a hoarse roar again.

'Duck him—drown him!' and with these an ominous hiss that meant further mischief.

Norah, who had taken no part in all these proceedings, stepped quickly forward, and caught the

old man, who was shaking and trembling in every limb, by the hand. The crowd were quiet again, curious to see what she would do.

She held him by the hand, and motioned them to silence.

'He is an old man,' she said, 'and helpless. It is my father and my—and Jack Armstrong that he has injured, not you. Let him be my prisoner, and please make way for us to pass out.'

The men parted right and left, and the girl passed through the midst, leading her prisoner in safety. They moved slowly, because the old man's limbs were trembling, and in his ears rang the threats of the revengeful mob.

'We turn here,' said the girl, 'out of their sight. So now I will take you by a short cut to our house.'

As they disappeared a mighty shout reached their ears. It was the fickle mob shouting for Jack, and, foremost among the voices, Norah thought she could distinguish that of her father. This was very possible, because that Irishman, besides being gifted with an enthusiastic and sympathetic nature which obliged him to take part in all demonstrations of joy and respect, had an admirable, and even a trumpet-like voice, of which he was at this moment making the fullest use, dancing, and roaring, and waving his stick, while his coat-tails hung in shreds about him.

Mr. Cardiff shivered and shook.

'They're coming after me,' he said. 'They are running after me. They will murder me. Oh! it is a dreadful thing to be murdered. I once murdered a boy . . . ten years ago. He took a long time to die. . . . And ever since that I've had to go back once a year to look at the place where

I did it. I went to sleep before he was dead. And sometimes I think he isn't dead at all.' His reason, for the moment, was gone, through the fear that possessed him.

There was a short cut through the narrow streets, which had once been green lanes, to Myles's cottage. Norah led him, trembling and babbling, along these. Then she took him into her own sitting-room, and placed him in an arm-chair, and brought him a jug of milk.

'Are you hungry? Are you thirsty?'

'I'm hungry and thirsty both. I've got no money to pay my bill at the inn. I've had nothing to eat all day, and nothing last night but whisky. Give me some more whisky.'

'No, drink the milk. It is good for you.'

He took a long draught of the milk. Then he looked up and laughed—a queer, vacuous laugh.

'Give me some cold meat,' he said. 'I don't know who you are, or how I came here. There's something up, but I can't remember.'

She fetched him cold meat. As he ate greedily, she began to think of his wretched, miserable, sinful life, terminating in an old age so ungodly and so despicable. Then tears came into her eyes, and when her guest looked up his hostess was weeping over him.

He answered her look with one that might almost be called a look of shame. The meat had strengthened him, and his reason was returned.

'Don't cry over me,' he said roughly. 'Keep your tears for some one worth crying over. . . . Lend me a hat, and give me a little money, and let me go.'

She brought him a hat of Jack's, and took out her purse.

'I have not got much money,' she said, looking at the contents.

The man made a snatch at the little purse, and tore it from her hands. She half screamed, and then looked him boldly in the face.

'Take it all,' she said. 'You are welcome to it all—and more, if I had it—if only you will repent and lead a better life.'

He hesitated. Then he gently placed the purse back in her hands. And then he began to stammer:

'I tried to ruin Jack Armstrong. I know you now. You are Myles Cuolahlan's daughter. . . . I wanted to murder the boy ten years ago. . . . It is all true. . . . You saved my life from the men. . . . You brought me here. . . . You gave me meat and drink. . . . You. . . . You. . . . He bent his head. 'You shed tears over me. . . . And I rob you. I said I was a gentleman once. I was. . . . I was a gentleman once.'

The wretched man left the purse in her hands, untouched, and disappeared.

CHAPTER X.

BUT Jack returned no more to the works. Next morning he called very early to see Mr. Bayliss, who was at breakfast.

Ella was pouring out tea, and made a pretty picture in her light morning dress and fair curls.

'Come in, Armstrong,' shouted Mr. Bayliss, in his cheeriest way, 'come in. Hodder was here last night. And I'm going to make an example of every man. Hodder's got the names of some fifty. You may trust Hodder in everything that doesn't want more than com-

mon sense. Sit down and have some breakfast.'

'Oh! Mr. Armstrong,' said Ella, in her pretty, placid way, 'we have heard the whole story. And you might have been killed.'

'Might have been killed? Would have been killed,' said her father, 'but for that trump of a girl, Norah Cuolahan. Countess of Connaught, Frank Perry-mont calls her. Gad! I'd make her Duchess at once, if I had my will. To think of her—Hodder met her, and told her he was afraid there would be danger. Instead of sending for the police, she made Hodder take her to the place. She ought to be a general in petticoats. Armstrong, I drink her health in a cup of tea.'

'Norah is a brave girl,' said Jack, reddening.

'Will you take tea or coffee, Mr. Armstrong?' asked Ella. 'Oh! how I wish I had been there! To do one brave thing in your life, you know; it makes one envious. Two lumps of sugar or one? Three? oh! Mr. Armstrong, that is very extravagant. I should like to have seen Norah as Hodder described her. Papa, I didn't know before that Hodder was so clever.'

'Hodder is mad about it, Jack. He was here last night describing the whole scene, and if I did not know that Hodder is the most sober creature alive, I should have said he had been drinking. As it is, I can only say that Hodder has mistaken his vocation, and ought to have been an actor.'

'And when she took the wretched man away from the mob, where did she take him to?'

'She took him to the Cottage, and gave him something to eat. Then he went away and disappeared,' said Jack. 'But it was not to talk about Norah that I came up, Mr. Bayliss. It was to ask you a favour.'

'Ask a dozen, my boy, and you shall have them all. I was in hopes that you were going to show me the invention that they made so much of.'

'Not yet, Mr. Bayliss. I will come to that presently.'

'Well, let us talk business. Ella, my girl, run away and blow up the servants. She always does that every morning.'

'Oh, papa! And ran away.'

'Now then, Armstrong.'

'First, I want you to forgive the hands, who were goaded to madness by that miserable fellow, Cardiff.'

'Never, by the Lord! Out they go!'

'You see, Mr. Bayliss, there are four hundred of them. You can't punish all. One is as guilty as the other, if there is any guilt. And the man had deceived them all with his lies.'

'What did Cuolahan mean by ever letting you be mixed up with such a rascal?'

'I will tell you the story as briefly as I can.'

Jack told him, beginning from the time when he left the house of the Bastables.

'The man is gone. It is my belief that he will never come back again. The cause removed, the effect has already disappeared, and the hands were as demonstrative with me in the popular direction as they were in the other.'

'Forgive them?' said Mr. Bayliss meditatively. 'Forgive them? Well; it was not my intention, I assure you. But as you ask it—you are the aggrieved party—I don't well see how I can refuse you. I will have them up, and make them a speech, this very morning.'

'Thank you. Now there is another thing. It is more than a year since I was out of my apprenticeship. I have worked on in

your engine-room, waiting for something to turn up, and nothing has yet turned up.'

'Well—no,' said his employer, to whom Jack was a servant whom he got for nothing. 'I have not yet seen my way—but I shall before long, I have no doubt I shall—to offering you a regular salary and a leading position. I have not forgotten that in the old days your poor father and I were partners. It was a sorry business we had, Armstrong; a devilish poor affair, as you may guess. Only the finding of the iron set me up.'

'That, and the working of the Ravendale seam, I suppose.'

'Ay—ay!' returned Mr. Bayliss. 'That was the best stroke of business I ever did. But go on.'

'What I came especially to say is this: Mr. Fortescue, with his usual liberality, wants me to go to Germany.'

'Go to Germany? What will you see in Germany that you cannot see here?'

'Not much. Our machinery is better: our men are better; and where they work one ton, we work a thousand. Still, there is something. Where is the finest steel made?'

'In Prussia, confound it!'

'Yes, but why?'

'You ought to know by this time.'

'I do know. But I want to go and see. I am a chemist, as you know, among other things.'

'You are a devilish clever young fellow, Jack Armstrong,' said Mr. Bayliss. 'And you know everything, I believe.'

'I know a good deal about metals. And I am going to Germany to learn more. I am going to find out, Mr. Bayliss,' said Jack, his face flushing, 'if I can, the way to make as good steel here as they make in Prussia.'

Bayliss looked at him for a moment with a sort of astonishment.

'By Gad! you are a plucky young rascal. And ambitious, I believe.'

'I told you before that I am ambitious. Mr. Bayliss, all this town, and all the land around it, once belonged to my fathers.' Mr. Bayliss turned pale. 'That is all gone now, and gone for good.' Mr. Bayliss recovered his natural colour. 'But I cannot bear to think that I shall have to go on all my life as an *employé*. I tell you because you are an old friend of my father's, and because you have been extremely kind to me, that I mean to be a master. Mr. Fortescue talks of giving me money, but I have no claims to it, and he has cousins who will think that I have defrauded them. I would rather make my own way.'

'It is an honourable ambition, Jack,' replied Mr. Bayliss. 'A very honourable ambition. It was my own. Let me make my own way, I used to say, and show the world what sort of a man I am. Go on, even if you clash with my interests.'

'I shall hardly do that,' said Jack.

'I don't know. I am not so young as I was. I am fifty. I have no successor. Perhaps—who knows? And then you will marry Norah Cuolahan, I suppose.'

It was Jack's turn to change colour.

'I am afraid not. I am sure I shall not. I have always regarded Norah as my sister.'

'And as for a successor,' continued Mr. Bayliss, in a ruminative manner—'I suppose you know, or if you do not, I may tell you in confidence, that I have always looked on the marriage of my daughter and Frank Perry-mont as the most natural way of carrying on my works. Frank

has not your practical abilities, but he will learn, and, after all, the ball once set rolling is kept up by the paid people whose interest it is. The work is, you know, enormous—enormous,' he added, with a succulent roll of his tongue. 'But we capitalists are never content. Suppose I may be worth a few hundreds of thousands now, why should I not be worth a few millions? Jack Armstrong, you will get in the swim presently, for you are a fellow of determination—got it from your mother, I suppose.'

'Was my poor mother possessed of determination?'

'She must have been, or else she never could have ——' ('married your father,' he was going to say, but he checked himself)—'never could have given birth to you, my boy. However, let us return to business. You will go to Germany, you say. Very good. I cannot stop you. When do you return?'

'I propose to be away for a twelvemonth or so. Meantime, I am anxious about Myles Coulahan. Will you keep him on?'

'Armstrong, Coulahan is the most honest collector I ever had, and the most regular. The rents come in, thanks to his blarney, with twice the certainty they used to. I shall keep him on, and I shall raise his salary. The rents,' he said, 'are a small matter to me, of course, but it is my principle, even over a thousand or two a year, to have things as carefully managed as with the great works. Coulahan shall stay.'

'Thank you. It would break the poor fellow's heart, now that he has his daughter with him, to give up his new life and take to the old. That, however, would be impossible.'

'And Miss Ferens?'

'Miss Ferens acquiesces in every-

thing. More than that, she finds she cannot live altogether apart from Norah, and talks of staying with her sometimes.'

'Indeed! Really, I am astonished. We shall be glad to call upon Miss Ferens. I am very glad indeed to learn that we are going to have Miss Ferens at Esbrough. And when do you start, Armstrong?'

'I start as soon as I can get away—as soon as you will let me go.'

'I will not keep you a minute. I discharge you,' said Bayliss, laughing. 'I discharge you from this moment. And, my dear boy, if my purse can——'

'Thank you very much,' said Jack; 'but I only take money from Mr. Fortescue. He always keeps me well supplied. And now, Mr. Bayliss, that I have got your promise to forgive the hands, and to keep on Myles Coulahan in your employment, and have obtained my discharge from the works, I think there is nothing more to say, except to thank you again. Forgive me for keeping my invention a secret. It is intended to lay the foundation-stone of my fortune.'

They shook hands and parted. Bayliss, when he was gone, sat thinking. The past was twelve years old and more; it was well-nigh forgotten; there was very little remorse, pity, or fear left after so many years of safety and unsuspecting. He held the land which he had fraudulently acquired; on it was the seam of iron, and on it stood the works out of which he had built a gigantic fortune: but he forgot how he had acquired it. It is not true, you see, that criminals are always shaking in their shoes. I believe that they go on comfortably enough so long as the prospect of being found out is remote. When the chance ap-

pears probable, they repent and are exceedingly sorry, just like the bad boy at the approach of the cane. The law seemed far off to Mr. Bayliss, and indeed he had almost ceased to believe in its existence. But this young Armstrong. He began to think that he was getting old. Supposing Frank Perrymont and Ella were to marry. The great works could never be improved unless in more vigorous hands. This young Armstrong, this clever, fearless, confident young fellow, who marched straight on to his goal, whatever it was—why not marry him to Ella, instead? And then, as he thought of the lad's determined face and resolute step, he thought of what might happen if—but no, that was impossible. Armstrong went back to the Cottage. Norah was alone, for her father had gone about his collecting business. She was at some light work, sitting among her flowers and singing softly to herself.

Jack sat down opposite to her, and was silent.

'You are taking a holiday, Jack?' she asked. 'All wheels and whirr makes Jack a dull boy. You shall walk with me as far as High Street presently, if you like.'

'I am going away, Norah.'

'Going away? Oh, Jack! Going away? And when?'

'I am only going for a few months, because—for several reasons. Partly because I cannot go back and work among the men as I have done. I have grown out of it, Norah. And there is another thing: I want to follow up an idea.'

'More wheels, Jack? Oh! when will you think about something else?'

'What is better to think about, Norah? Mr. Fortescue approves entirely, and I am going to Germany.'

'And leave me, Jack? Leave my father and me alone?'

Jack's heart gave a mighty heave. Among the wheels that filled his brain there was always Norah's face; amid the din of the engines, above the awful thud of the steam hammer, and louder than the shriek of the whistle, was the sweet, soft voice of Norah. Not one of those voices that pretend to be soft, and so are spoken low; but a voice that was loud and clear as a bell, and yet always soft; as soft when it rung out with a fighting song, as when it wept in an Irish ballad. Leave Norah? It was hard.

'Leave us both, Jack?'

'Yes, Norah. I have been very happy since you came. So happy, but for one thing, that I do not feel the same man.'

'What is the one thing, Jack?'

'I will tell you, some day. In fact, I suppose I must. Yes, Norah, I am going to Germany; and I shall stay six months, a year, two years, as long as I have to stay until my problem is worked out. It is a great problem, Norah, and one that will bring me fortune, if I solve it.'

'You do not love money, Jack?'

'Yes I do, Norah. I love money for the things it will bring. I should like to put you into a better house, and to let your father do nothing all his life but admire you; and—'

'And what would you do with yourself, Jack?'

'I have got nothing to do with myself,' said Jack gloomily. 'I am done for already.'

Then he began to trifle round the room, taking up little things and putting them down again, hovering round the girl like a moth round a lamp. She sat half watching him, waiting for him to speak, but working away still, after the way of her sex, with the

air of being deeply occupied with the embroidery.

Her hair, lustrous and dark; the soft splendour of her eyes; the bend of her neck; the divine shape of her head; her pretty fingers deftly working in and out among the threads; the music of her voice; the rustle of her dress; all these were so many magnets which had attracted the unhappy young man till he could bear it no longer. It was not his desire to work out a problem which drove him away; it was not his invention which kept him night after night among his wheels; it was not thought of mechanics which made him silent and gloomy; it was Norah—Norah and the other woman; the siren who had lulled him with flatteries, beguiled him with music, persuaded him that she was beautiful and good, and coaxed his troth from him.

He stood over her, and he noticed that her fingers trembled as she worked; for if he dared not speak to her, she dared not look up at him.

He lost his self-control; he stooped and took her hand in his; he knelt at her feet, and kissed it passionately.

'I am breaking my honour in speaking to you. I have no right to tell you that I love you, Norah.'

'No right, Jack? Why have you no right?'

'Because, Norah, you will hate me. Because I have given away my word to another woman. Because I was a poor foolish creature, who allowed himself to be cajoled and tricked. Norah, I love you, and I am engaged to another woman. Pity me.'

Norah's tears rose to her eyes. Then she gently withdrew her hand, and tried to face the question.

'Jack,' she whispered, 'is it Ella Bayliss?'

'No,' he answered.

She was silent again for a space.

'Jack, is there no way out of it?'

'None.'

'Does she know that you do not love her?'

'She knows. But she will not give me up. Do not ask me any more, Norah.'

'She knows, and she will not give him up,' Norah repeated. 'Jack, let us have no concealments.' She placed her hand on his arm. 'I love you, too. I know it now. I knew it the moment I felt the touch of your hand and your lips on my hand. I love you as much as you can love me, and more, my own, my hero—more a thousand times, because you have your work to think about, and I have only—you. My poor Jack, we are very unhappy. How old was I when Miss Ferens took me away?'

'I don't know, Norah. Four or five. Such a little thing. Such an affectionate little girl, with your arms round my neck always. And I was only eight or nine. We slept on the same bed—a rough, coarse bed it was, but we lay in each other's arms. I have never thought about it until now, because I have always been so hard at work. Now it all comes back to me, the old time.'

'I remember a little, Jack, and all these years I have had you before my eyes. I thought of your growing up, and growing wise—my father told me all when he came every year to see me—we used to talk about nothing but you. I knew all about your pony, and your books, and how Mr. Fortescue taught you. And so, somehow, you were always present with me. When Miss Ferens and I came to understand each other, I told her all, and she was jealous of you, because she loved me so

much herself. Let us tell each other everything. You will not think me . . . unmaidenly, will you, Jack, if I tell you all?

'Norah!

'Then my father asked me to come home to him, and I came. It was right to come; but, Jack—I could only confess it to you—the thought was in my mind that I should meet you again. And I came. You were so cold, Jack, when first I came.'

'It was because I was afraid of you, Norah.'

'Afraid of me? Oh, Jack, how could you be afraid of me?'

'You were so much above me. You were so different to the young ladies I had ever seen before. You were—'

'No, Jack, not above you. Only different from you. I see, now, that we have been brought up to look at things from different points of view. That is not being above you.'

'Norah, you do not know all.'

'Then do not tell me all. And when my father kissed me, Jack, I turned to be kissed by my brother, and he only gave me a timid pressure of his fingers. Then I knew that we were no longer brother and sister, and the old relations disappeared. I tried to keep it up, Jack, but it would not do.'

'No, Norah, it would not do. A veil has come up between us two. My dear, there is always a veil between two people who love each other, till they know the truth, and then the veil is taken off.'

'Yes, Jack!' She made a little motion with both her hands, as if to shake off a veil from her face. 'See, Jack, the veil has gone. Read me now! Read my very soul, if you will.'

She laid her arm round his neck, and her face to his, for all

this time Jack was kneeling at her feet. He drew her to him and kissed her, not passionately, but sadly.

'Should I have told you, darling?' he whispered. 'Is it not a double breach of faith?'

'No, Jack! I thank God that you have told me. Now I shall be happier. Tell me one thing, Jack. Is *she* in Germany?'

'No, Norah.'

'Then go, Jack! go! It will give us time. Let me kiss you once, just as if I were a little girl again.'

She half rose from her chair and threw herself before him, her arms round his neck, her cheek against his. It was so like, and so unlike, the last embrace that Jack had received from Mrs. Merriion, that his heart fell like lead.

Then she rose. Jack rose, too, and they stood face to face, hand-locked.

'You see, Jack, now, that I love you. I shall always love you. If you cannot marry me, Jack, never mind. That is nothing, now that I know that we love each other. But if anything goes wrong with you, Jack—if you are ever troubled, ever anxious, ever despondent about things which are not those of your wedded life, remember that I always love you, and that you must come to me. Promise me, dear Jack.'

'I promise, Norah.'

'Jack, you will be vexing yourself that you have told me. Do not, dear. It is better so. It is better always to know the truth, and face it: and then we can do our duty. You will try to give up thinking of me, and then you will perhaps get to think of, and love—the other one—'

'Norah, I am always thinking of her. And the more I think, the less I love her.'

'Jack, I saw the other day,

quoted, two lines which seem to me the noblest that English gentleman ever wrote. Do you know them?—

'I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more.'

'I know,' said Jack. 'Norah, I am glad I told you.'

'Yes,' said Norah, 'you have loved me. That will be always something to think about. Only, Jack, henceforth it must never be spoken of again. I have had my love-scene. I have told you all. Ask me any question you like, and I will answer it. But we must never again speak of love. For that is a secret between us that must be hidden away for ever.'

'You are always right, Norah,' said Jack. 'If you knew how contemptible I feel in your eyes, how wretched in my own, you would—'

'Nonsense, Jack! I should do nothing. You must not feel contemptible. I ask you nothing. But I shall very soon know everything. You will go to Germany. You will work. You will make yourself famous. Perhaps—who knows?—you may escape from the fetters that bind you. And then we can talk again. But my Jack will always save his honour.'

Jack said nothing, but kissed her hand humbly, and left the room.

Norah heard him go into his study and lock the door, and then she crept upstairs, and threw herself upon the bed, crying and sobbing. Jack loved her—but of what use was his love when he was promised to another? Who was that other? She started from the bed, and stood thinking. As she stood, she heard

Jack's feet in the little hall. He left the house. She darted to the window, just to look at him. She saw him step across the road, and stop for a moment irresolute at the door of Laburnum Cottage. Then he walked up the steps and knocked.

Norah sank back against the wall. Good heavens! He was going to marry Mrs. Merriion.

There was no doubt in her mind, not the least. She had found out the truth. All in a moment it flashed upon her. The other one—the woman he was engaged to marry—it was Mrs. Merriion. She divined the truth: she *felt* that she was right. Marry Mrs. Merriion? 'Not,' thought Norah, 'if I can prevent it.'

Then she sat down to think. She wept no more. The spirit of war was in her breast; she must fight for her lover; she must, somehow, rescue him. But how? She did not know.

Should she tell her father? No. Should she tell Miss Ferens? Yes: but it would be of little use. Should she tell Mr. Fortescue? Perhaps.

Mrs. Bastable—it suddenly flashed across her how Mrs. Bastable once mysteriously hinted at things going on which she should not allow to advance beyond a certain point—that was Jack's involvement.

'He *shall* not marry her!' said the girl, setting her lips together and flashing her eyes. 'He is mine.'

You may inflict all wrongs upon a woman, and she will forgive you—except three. You may not forsake her for another woman; you may not take away her child; and you may not take away her lover.

(To be continued.)

NOTES ON POPULAR DRAMATISTS.

V.—MR. W. G. WILLS.

MR. WILLS is essentially an artist and a poet.

As a matter of fact he is an artist in the common acceptation of the term, and paints with a subtlety and skill which place him high amongst his contemporaries in that particular art; but the word is used here in its broader signification. Art is his mistress, and he serves her very faithfully, though not very diligently. All that he does is guided by her, and bears her impress; but he does not do much, and sometimes the unswerving devotion of his mind is not fully expressed in his work as it comes before the world. It has been asserted that genius is an infinite capacity for taking pains; and if so, Mr. Wills is not the happy possessor of genius. Few, however, will be content to accept this definition, which is one of those epigrams which are chiefly popularised by their boldness. Genius is, rather, a heaven-sent inspiration; and the worst of it is that the man who has genius rarely has industry. It is easy to imagine that Mr. Wills can sit and dream great plays, admirably dramatic incidents, and exquisitely-poetical phrases; some of these, very happily for us, we have within reach: but the mere labour of literary composition, the simple necessity for sitting at a table, dipping a pen into the ink, and putting thoughts into black and white—these things hinder men such as Mr. Wills presumably is from giving his perfect conceptions to the world.

This sounds like a complaint against one for whose ability competent and impartial critics must

assuredly entertain a very hearty and sincere regard; but it is disappointing to note that in some few minor points, which a very little care would rectify, Mr. Wills leaves some very trifling weaknesses or crudenesses which just prevent his work from receiving entirely unqualified approval. Some unnecessary scene, some language less worthy than that of the rest of the play, some clumsiness of construction, some halting line, will occasionally, if rarely, mar the effect of the labours of one who comes nearer to the great writers of the past than any dramatist who now puts the results of his labours on the stage. Mr. Wills flies high. His subjects are almost without exception lofty ones, demanding the most powerful treatment; his characters are, as a rule, historical personages who have made their mark on the ages in which they lived. Of course it is nothing to urge against a writer that his characters are taken from every-day life. Sir Andrew Aguecheek, and his friend Sir Toby, Malvolio, the steward, and Maria, the maid, play a very considerable part in 'Twelfth Night'; and in another work of Shakespeare, several Athenian handicraftsmen are prominent; but as a rule the most powerful plays which have been written have dealt with the great ones of the earth; and it is with them that Mr. Wills has chosen to deal.

Mr. Wills holds very strong political views. He is a Conservative and a staunch Royalist, and his expression of these opinions has been vigorous. On the whole, it is probable that this way of thinking

has aided Mr. Wills's popularity; but, at any rate, he has never condescended to outrage history by portraying his enemies in an absolutely unwarrantable manner. It may be annoying to those who pride themselves on their Saxon blood to read that England was conquered by the Normans; but it is really impossible to assert, for the sake of soothing descendants of the original islanders, that the Norman conquest is all a myth, that Harold won the battle of Hastings, established his rule, slew the man we have been taught to call William the Conqueror, and exterminated the Norman race. Similarly, if Mr. Wills introduces Oliver Cromwell into his plays, as he has done on two occasions, especially when his hero is a Royalist he cannot be expected to go out of his way to gratify admirers of the 'great Protector' by avoiding or glossing over the facts that Cromwell was cruel and blood-thirsty, was avaricious, and did not always display either generalship to prevent defeat or courage to retrieve it. Englishmen, as a rule, do not believe in Mr. Carlyle's attempted rehabilitation of Cromwell's character. Similar attempts have been made to prove that Nero was really a very good-hearted man, and Jezebel after all a very estimable woman when you came to know her thoroughly. Opinions, however, are still strongly held to the effect that Nero was, to say the least of it, not remarkably tender-hearted or virtuous, and that Jezebel occasionally came short in the pursuit of those high principles which a lady in her station of life ought scrupulously to have regarded. Although the prayer for the martyred king Charles I. is now omitted from the services of the Church, in consequence of the efforts of a Liberal peer who died a few weeks ago,

facts cannot be blotted out of English history in the same fashion, by Act of Parliament.

It has been alleged against Mr. Wills that the construction of his plays is habitually weak; but from this opinion I differ strongly. 'Charles I.,' for instance, seems to me admirably put together. At once the chord which tells of coming strife is sounded. 'Slander and treason swagger through the streets,' the Lady Eleanor, the Queen's attendant, says, and tells the Queen her vision of

'The spacious sable booth
All hung with fair black crape. And as
I looked
And marvelled what it meant, lo! at the
opening
A sad and courtly figure stood alone,
In deepest mourning; torn and soiled his
cloak;
His eyes exceeding sorrowful, yea, till
tears
Came to the eyes of all'

—a terrible foreshadowing of the last awful scene in which the figure bore a part. Lord Huntley is grave, and already the Queen has fears of Moray's troth.

Then, like sunshine, the King appears, Prince James on his shoulder, the Princess Elizabeth holding his hand.

'This is the place where cavaliers dismount
And bait their horses. Why, my good
man Jamie,
You grow apace and overweight your
steed!'

So, putting down the child, he lies on the grassy bank, and, at the request of the little princess, whom he nurses on his knees, tells her the story of how

'King Lear once ruled in this land,
With princely power and peace,
And had all things with heart's content
That might his joys increase.'

The King lovingly answering the gentle reproaches of his queen, listening to the prattle of his

children, repeating to them the good old ballad, forms a delightful picture, made all the more striking by the stirring events which are so soon to overwhelm their happiness. Disquieting rumours of coming strife vex the King's mind; but presently the state barge floats down the calm stream, and as the King looks on the 'all-priceless blessings,' dear wife and babes, eager for the holiday, his brow clears.

'After long care and moil, I thirst for peace.
Yea, as the Psalmist longed for wings
t'escape,
Yea, for dove's wings, to fly and be at rest,
So now the gentle sail shall be our wing,
The air we rise upon shall be sweet music;
Breathe music softly till the waves shall seem
To move in silent glamour, and the banks
Be rimmed with rainbow, and the great skycope
Seem like the haven we are sailing for.'

So they enter the barge, and are slowly carried out of sight, and an admirably dramatic act comes to an end. And to this the very forcible end of the second act forms a notable contrast. Mr. Wills is certainly not the inventor of the story that Cromwell, claiming to draw his descent from Joan, only sister to the first Earl of Essex, desired the grant of a reversion of the title. Whether or not the story is true, cannot be proved, though Cromwell's avarice in other cases gives probability to it. At any rate, the tale is extant, and written in very choice English by several historians; and the indignation of the King is nobly expressed in his contemptuous denunciation of

'A mouthing patriot with an itching palm,
In one hand menace, in the other greed.'

To Mr. Irving, of course, as well

as to Mr. Wills, the credit of this scene is due; and those who saw the play will not readily forget the irresistible dignity of the King's voice and gesture, as, when Cromwell with insolent forgetfulness has donned his hat, Charles utters the command,

'Uncover in the presence of your king.'

The following speech, too, is exceedingly fine: 'Now,' the King cries,

'Now thou art pleased to drop thy patriot mask,
Methinks I see a modern Attila!
One who, if once our dynasty should wane,
Would rally to the front with iron truncheon;
A tyrant, maundering and merciless;
Anarch of Liberty! At heart a slave!
Thou and thy dupes have driven me to war,
And on thy conscience fall its fell account.'

(And who shall doubt that there the fell account did fall with mortal bitterness?)

Then Cromwell summons the soldiers who are secreted to seize the King, if he should refuse to comply with the rebel's ambitious request. The Puritan troops swarm into the chamber, but are held back by the majesty of their sovereign.

'Which of you touches his anointed king?'

Charles cries; and only Cromwell, maddened at the failure of his project, can find his voice. 'That will I!' he cries, and steps forward. But the Queen, inspired by her great love, has been watchful for the safety of her lord. 'God save the King!' cries she, waving her kerchief; and echoing the cry, 'God save the King!' Huntley and a body of Cavaliers rush forward and draw in line before Cromwell and his men. Few who saw this act at the Lyceum Theatre will re-

fuse to admit cordially that Mr. Wills is a great dramatist, and Mr. Irving a great actor.

It would be tedious to enter into a discussion as to Mr. Wills's conception of Cromwell. Mr. Wills has been attacked, and he has defended himself; the only difference between the author and his opponents being that, while they express their own opinions in their own words, he quotes history. Cromwell's blood-thirstiness is proved out of his own mouth by his own account of the Siege of Drogheda: 'We refused them quarter,' he writes; 'I believe we put to the sword the whole number of the defendants. I do not think a hundred escaped with their lives: those that did are in safe custody for Barbadoes,' *i.e.*, slavery. Again: 'Our men were ordered by me to put them all to the sword.' One ground upon which Cromwell has been defended is, that England enjoyed rest and peace under his rule; and in answer to this Mr. Wills quotes Hallam—who was, be it remembered, a staunch Liberal, and as safe an authority as is to be found. 'To govern according to law,' Hallam writes, 'may sometimes be the usurper's wish, but can seldom be in his power. The Protector abandoned all thought of it . . . All illusion was now gone as to the pretended benefit of the Civil War. This unparalleled tyranny had ended in a despotism compared to which all the illegal practices of former reigns—all that had cost Charles his life and crown—appeared but as dust in the balance.'

Another very admirable scene was where the King discovers Lord Moray's base treachery—for though all treachery is base, Lord Moray's was especially atrocious. The King is surrounded, overpowered and arrested; and Moray's guilt, in

this his moment of triumph, overwhelms him. He hangs his guilty head.

'Charles Moray! I had meant to go in silence;
But pain o'ermasters me, and I must speak.
Come nearer.'

Moray approaches; and as the King turns on him those calm, reproachful eyes, void of any trace of anger or bitterness, the traitor slowly sinks upon his knees; and the King speaks:—

'I saw a picture once by a great master,
It was an old man's head.
Narrow and evil was its wrinkled front—
Eyes close and cunning; a dull vulpine smile.
'Twas called a Judas! Wide that painter erred.
Judas had eyes like thine, of candid blue;
His skin was smooth, his hair of youthful gold;
Upon his brow shone the white stamp of truth,
And lips like thine did give the traitor kiss!'

Of all 'Charles I.' however, the most tragic and pathetic scene was in the last act, where the King, in the hour of his martyrdom, bids his last farewell to wife and little ones. Led by Huntley, the children, knowing nothing of the terrible truth, rush to their father's loving arms. All they know is that their mother's eyes are very, very sad, and her cheek deathly pale, and she has told them before their father enters the room that he is going away very soon, and that they are now to say good-bye.

'Oh, be so kind, and love him; put no question
Mes chéris! Look at him all brave and smiling.
Give him one sweet, long kiss, and say good-bye!'

One kiss! They must not linger, lest the fortitude of all should fail to bear the strain. When the King comes in, sadly, but yet very man-

fully, the little ones bound into his arms. 'Speak to them: I'll soon be calm!' the poor Queen murmurs; and with royal courage Charles banishes emotion from his face, and speaks to Elizabeth:—

'Well, sweetheart, do you like your holiday?

ELIZ. Father, and must you go away?

QUEEN. Hush! Hush!

KING (*to Henry*). And you, my little truant! I have heard

That you begin to ride and grow so stout.

Art thou not glad thy mother hath come back?

ELIZ. Father, come back to Hampton Court with us!

The walks are covered with such bonnie pine cones;

And, father, we might have a sail with you.

KING. Sweethearts, I am going from you for a while.

And since thou'rt grown a tall man and a true,

I want thee to take trusty care of mother.

Thou'lt never grieve her, Henry, promise me;

And thou wilt talk of me right pleasantly,

Walk by her side, and prithee speak of me

As if I were at home—nay, walking with thee.'

And then he turns to the Queen, for the last hour is now very near. With exquisite tenderness he gazes for the last time into her loving eyes, and to her he gives the remembrances which the children will come to cherish with such passionate love when the dread truth is revealed to them. A locket, a ring, and then from his breast he draws her picture, and looks from the fair young face on the ivory to her own grief-stricken eyes and pale lips.

'The miniature that I have kissed so oft Till, like the pilgrim's lips, love left its trace

On the worn velvet!

This I will carry with me to the grave—

Cursed be the hand that robs it from my bosom.

What shall I leave to thee?

To thee I do consign my memory!

Oh, banish not my name from off thy lips

Because it pains awhile in naming it.

Red-eyed Regret that waiteth on thy steps

Will daily grow a gentle, dear companion,

And hold sweet converse with thee of thy dead.

I fear me I may sometimes fade from thee,

(*QUEEN presses to him.*)

That when the heart expelleth grey-stoled grief

I live no longer in thy memory:

Oh! keep my place in it for ever green,

All hung with the *immortelles* of thy love,

That sweet abiding in thine inner thought

I long for more than sculptured monument

Or proudest record 'mong the tombs of kings.'

And then the grim soldiers clank into the hall. One look of great love he fastens on his Queen's face, one kiss he presses on her lips, and calmly suffers the traitors to lead him to the sacrifice. This scene may not have historical warrant, but it is admirable drama.

Perhaps the language of 'Charles I.' is not so poetical or powerful as much of Mr. Wills's other work, but it is a noble tragedy, and there can be little doubt that it will not be suffered to die. Mr. Irving has made the part of the martyred King so entirely his own that other actors would hesitate to touch it, even did copyright permit them to do so. Its revival will always be very welcome, and its literary excellence makes it worthy of a place on the library shelves amongst the great dramatists of the past.

Tenderness and patient love, the natural attributes of poetry, are conspicuous in almost all that Mr. Wills has done. His drama of 'Jane Shore' has not yet been produced in London, but if only a competent actress is found for it (unfortunately, where she is to be

looked for is a mystery) the play would inevitably create a deep interest. 'Jane Shore' begins just before the death of Edward IV. In a splendid chamber of state, in a house which the King has granted her, a motley crowd await the coming of the mistress. Beggars in rags come for their bread, and court ladies and gentlemen, sumptuously attired, wait to see how the favourite has played mediatrix for them with the sick monarch. Concerning her real character opinions differ. Her bearing is noble and generous, but there is ground for suspecting much ill, and charity has not always reigned supreme in courts.

'She tendeth the sick king, and rumour
says
She plays the part of chaplain and of
nurse,
And is a most angelic hypocrite.'

Here, however, at court, is the wife of Henry Shore, the honest goldsmith, and the father of her child. She has a home, and it is not here. Too clearly she has sinned, and we do not know under what circumstances the Duke of Gloucester robbed her from her humble tradesman husband, caught her by force and dragged her to the court, a dainty morsel for the King. It was part of the Duke of Gloucester's plot against his brother; but, in truth, Mr. Wills has taken considerable liberties with fact in his treatment of the Queen's famous rival, and perhaps wisely refrains from explanations which will not stand the light. Mr. Wills's Jane Shore is very humble and womanly, and how it ever came to pass that, having been decoyed into the trap, she consented to remain there and feast on the tempting bait, is an insoluble mystery. 'It was a task laid on me, not usurped,' she afterwards tells the angry Queen; but there she stops.

Mistress Shore—that is to say, Mr. Wills's Mistress Shore—presently enters, and brings in her train contentment for rich and poor. The servants feed and clothe the hungry, and to the wealthy, who, having much would have still more, she gives tidings of the success of her requests on their behalf to the King for honours and places. Here, amongst the throng, is John Grist, a sturdy baker, once a neighbour to Henry Shore, the goldsmith; and Grist has come to speak a word to his neighbour's wife. What is the purport of it we do not learn, for the servants will not suffer him to approach their mistress, and hustle him out of the chamber.

The whirligig of time is in rapid motion just now, however. For a long while past Mistress Shore has, to no small extent, governed England. The King dies, and she is an outcast. The wealthy, who but a moment before have bent in fawning submission, turn from her with scorn, even the poor whom she has fed revile her, and only sturdy John Grist is faithful to his friend's wife, and stretches out a hand to her. And what of Henry Shore, who has been nursing his grief for so long? In his house he sits, alone and heart-broken, when the door opens and his wife stands before him; but his heart is frozen, and will not thaw at the presence which once filled it with sunshine and radiant peace. She vainly pleads to his unrelenting sternness. There is no pardon for her sin, he cries, but still she begs for the great boon of his forgiveness.

'Oh, there's no sin but mates with it a
pardon,
Although the pardon laggeth years be-
hind,
And travel wearily, and dew its path
With weeping.'

'Tis the one sin that finds no

expiation, the wrong which 'tis abasement to forgive,' he sternly answers, and shrinks from the hand that has strange kisses on it.

'—these hands have nursed the poor, Since thou hast touched them. I am not so vile.

Oh! let that icy stare melt to a smile,
A little smile, the earnest of a pardon
Which I will win from thee by slight degrees,
And build up day by day right lovingly,
And patiently and goodly. Be not deaf,
I have great thirst now for a little kindness.'

Still he is unrelenting; and then she urges her last prayer—that she may be permitted to see her child.

'Where is my child? Oh! bring him out to me!

And then I'll wander off into the night,
And quit thee if thou wilt. Henry—
my babe!'

With imploring hands outstretched, she beseeches.

'Thy babe?—he's dead!'

the husband replies; and with a wild cry of anguish and despair, she falls to the ground.

The husband's lips have belied his heart, where lies hid a great wealth of tenderness for her; and with agonised affection he caresses the still and ever beloved face, now all unconscious of the world.

With terrible anguish she works out her atonement. The Duke of Gloucester desires her presence, conducts her once more through the old palace, and vows to give her all again if she will do his bidding and help him in a scheme against the Queen, who has so bitterly hated and persecuted her; and Jane, sorely tempted, consents with eagerness to bring to the dust her enemy's haughty forehead. But when she hears by what means the vengeance is to be wrought she turns with horror from the tempter. Plainly,

the task demanded of her is, that she will say the Queen's sons are not the children of the King. With scorn she refuses, and vows that she would rather do penance in the streets with sheet and candle than do such loathsome bidding; for indeed she remembers her own lost boy. Nay, more: lest the Duke should injure the children, she will denounce his villainous scheme. The power is in his hands, however, and truth may cry in vain. She shall do the penance, he declares, and appoints servants to see the sentence carried out. Patiently she submits; but her patience and submission only serve to whet the Duke's anger. At length her reproaches madden him, and the remorseless decree of a most cruel death is passed upon her. She is to be driven through the land, dogged by trusty knaves; and he who shall protect or comfort her, offer her food or drink or gentle words, commits a treason and shall die for it. Even the haughty Queen pities, but cannot save, and Jane Shore in driven forth. Vainly she begs for a mouthful of bread or a cup of water. None dare feed her, though she is perishing with hunger; but at last honest John Grist, to whose door she has wandered, defies the Duke and all his evil might. 'John Grist, I'm starving at your door,' she moans. The neighbours strive to deter him, and his wife cries that to feed the outcast will be their death.

'Then may John Grist lie there in his own blood
An' he not give thee food!'

And he puts bread into her hands. The Duke's followers seize Grist, and one of them lays violent hands upon her, when Henry Shore rushes into the street, kills the ruffian who has assailed his wife, and while the traders drive back the

Duke's people, Shore takes his wife in his arms, and tenderly bears her into the house. Her crime is expiated. Sorrow has endured for a night; but this is morning, and there is joy—joy that would be perfect if only the child were here. Here, at last, is the husband who has never left her heart, and a great peace lights up the languid eyes. This is home. She speaks with passionate energy:—

'The sainted soul of a dead, mangled
wretch
Who writhed upon the wheel until God
took him,
So scans at first the shining walls of
heaven—
'Tis home! home! home!'

Home, with husband and—no more.
She slowly speaks again:—

'If I should call a name, a precious
name—
Yea, I will speak it; though the utter-
ance
Dispel the vision of my home, I'll speak
it.'

And very softly she murmurs the
name of the little one who in the
dear old days lighted the home
with joy:—

'Harry! my little Harry!—
Saints and angels! methought I heard
the patter of small feet.'

And the mother's ear has not de-
ceived her heart. The child is
alive, and standing wonderingly
before the mother who has been
away so long. Can it be, indeed,
that hers is such perfect bliss, or is
this some sweet dream?

'God! if I sleep, oh let me sleep for
ever!
If I be mad, let madness be my heaven
To all eternity!
Oh! my lost treasure, darling angel!
Dost know thy mother? And thou art
not dead!
I will not reason—simply I believe.
SHORE. I told thee, Jane, our child
was dead, for then
There was a gulf between thy child and
thee;

But now that thou hast battled through
the waves
And reached the happy headland Inno-
cence,
Thy child awaits thee.'

This play has been acted, I be-
lieve, with much success, though I
do not know by whom, in the
north of England. I have not seen
it; but it is impossible to read
this concluding scene without being
deeply moved. To speak critically,
however, the language is not well
sustained, though there are many
points of intense power. The be-
ginning of this last speech of the
heroine, for example, is admirable
in the extreme. Mr. Shore's ideas
of innocence are possibly ill-de-
fined; and it is very likely that
the construction of the work would
not seem faultless in representation
—to judge this from simply read-
ing a play is almost impossible.
If we could once bring ourselves
to accept Mr. Wille's Jane Shore,
the drama could not fail to be very
effective.

'Marie Stuart,' produced a couple
of years since, at the Princess's,
was not by any means in Mr. Wille's
best manner. There were fine
passages in it, but there was no
great interest, nothing to carry on
the attention from one scene to
another; no climax was aimed
at, and none was reached. I
hardly think that an actress of
talent could have made the play
successful; and the principal char-
acter was allotted to Mrs. Rousby,
who is not an actress of talent.
Mr. Rousby appeared to have mo-
delled his idea of John Knox upon
a study of the manners and cus-
toms of the pantaloons; and Mr.
Charles Harcourt was much too
mature and unromantic to form
an adequate representative of the
poet Chastelard.

Unworthy interpretation must
be assigned as the cause of the
comparative failure of 'Buckin-

ham' at the Olympic. The Puritan party, bitter at the brilliant success of 'Charles I.,' combined all their forces to abuse the play, and vehemently quoted Carlyle. In several of the criticisms the drama, as a drama, was neglected, and all the energies of the critics put forth to try and prove that Mr. Wills had perverted history altogether. Mr. Wills, however, boldly prefaced his work with the assertion that he had adhered with scrupulous fidelity to historical facts, except in a few trifling particulars, such as the artifice of Buckingham to win Mary Fairfax instead of Elizabeth Cromwell; as also, in the end of the play, where the Duke is brought for execution to Whitehall, the fact, of course, being that the Duke was in the Tower when Cromwell died. Anti-royalists exclaimed that Mr. Wills had invented the legend of Cromwell desiring that a child of his should wed the Duke; they loudly protested that the Protector had never failed in strategy or courage, and that until Mr. Wills arose none had ever called Cromwell avaricious; and the author, collecting the charges against himself, simply, as before, quoted his authorities—which were numerous; told the true story of Naseby, and of course, not professing to have been chronologically and minutely accurate, defended his position to great advantage.

Mr. Neville attempted the part of Buckingham, but made little of an exceedingly fine character. The easy dignity, the frank nobility of George Villiers were wanting. Louis XIV. declared that the Duke was the finest gentleman he had ever seen; and writers have waxed enthusiastic on the grace and charm of his manner, which did not make themselves apparent in Mr. Neville's impersonation. The female parts were not satisfactorily

sustained; and Mr. Creswick's Cromwell fell short of the mark.

Much of the verse is extremely fine; and I may quote the speeches of Cromwell and of the Duke, when the former finds that Buckingham, instead of wedding Elizabeth, has induced her to aid him in marrying Mary Fairfax. Cromwell joyously snatches aside the bride's veil, but instead of his daughter's face, he is amazed and infuriated to find Mary's; and Elizabeth, overcome, falls senseless. Elizabeth has loved Buckingham, and her father fears that the shock may break her heart.

He speaks:—

‘——— I will requite
This business in full measure to thy
bosom!
This is thy sentence: Whilst she pines
and withers
Thou, too, shalt pine and rot in deepest
dungeon;
As she shall droop, so shalt thou droop
and wither!
If she shall die—that day she dies for
love
Thou diest for treason! (*To guards*)
Seize him: to the Tower!’

And Buckingham replies proudly:

‘I do not plead with thee against this
sentence;
But, tyrant, trust me thou shalt share
it too.
I do condemn thee also to a dungeon.
Tremble by day—thy palace is a dun-
geon
Whose gaoler, Fear, shall keep the
golden key
And people every shadow with assassins!
Tremble by night—thy chamber is a
dungeon:
The winds shall hiss at thee their shrill
indictment—
The rain shall seem to thee a nation's
tears!
The household fire, which cheers the
innocents,
Shall take the semblance of red auto-
graphs
Signing the hideous death-warrant
again!
Thy murdered master's melancholy eyes
Shall open in thy dreams with mute
reproach.

Bitter remorse shall raven on thine heart,
And mocking fiends say "Amen" to thy prayers!
Waste thou and pine until we meet again!
CROMWELL. Gag him or strike him dead—away with him!

The limits of my space narrow, and I must finish the notice of a work which deserves more attention than I can bestow upon it, only commenting on the most dramatic scene which ends the play. Cromwell is at the point of death. Almost with his latest effort he had signed the Duke's death-warrant (here Mr. Wills takes poetic licence, for the warrant was never drawn up), and the Puritan soldiers wait to execute the sentence. Mary—the Duchess—has obtained a pardon from Richard Cromwell, but that is of course unavailing while the Protector breathes; and, having cheered his wife by professing that her pardon will save him, and sent her away rejoicing, the Duke prepares for death. He mounts the scaffold, where grimly awaiting him is the masked executioner, and with a few words of farewell, bravely spoken, lays his head on the block. The axe is raised. In a moment its sharp edge will fall until the fatal block is notched, when a gun is heard, and the bell of St. Paul's booms out solemnly—Cromwell is dead, and Richard's pardon, which Fairfax, rushing into the room, throws to the captain of the guard, is valid, and Buckingham rises to the world again. The lurid thunder-cloud has lifted:

— lo!

A sunny blazonry floods down the streets.
Hear ye my vision—

I've touched the very confines of the grave,
And I bring back the gift of prophecy.
See! the young king comes back to claim his own.
The streets are lined with loyalty; the light
Upon the front of every house is smiles.
He comes! He comes! The shoutings of his welcome,
Like the white foam on a proud vessel's prow,
Cleave at his progress, and joy stretches after
As the wide road of foam in a ship's wake.
Uncover, those who love him, shout
"Long live King Charles!"

The good luck which found Mr. Wills so splendid a representative of the martyr King, stood by him in 'The Man o' Airlie,' which Mr. Hermann Vezin has interpreted with consummate art. There has been seen upon the modern stage no finer performance than that of this admirable actor in the last act of this most pathetic play. In 'Eugene Aram' there was, as there invariably is in the author's works, some noble passages; but the play was practically a monologue, and probably the author did not pursue an unguided course in its arrangement.

For the elevation of the modern drama Mr. Wills has done much. He has never condescended to pander to a depraved taste, but has given artistic work, pure and healthy without exception. Rumour speaks well of 'Nell Gwynne,' and I trust that in this case rumour may speak truly. That there is brilliant success and lasting fame in store for the really great writer of whom I have given this hasty review, I firmly believe and cordially hope.

'PEYTON WREY.'



Itinéraire



MICHAEL STROGOFF,
OR THE RUSSIAN COURIER.

BY JULES VERNE.

CHAPTER IV.

FROM MOSCOW TO NIJNI-NOVGOROD.

THE distance between Moscow and Irkutak, about to be traversed by Michael Strogoff, was five thousand two hundred versts. Before the telegraph wire extended from the Ural Mountains to the eastern frontier of Siberia, the despatch service was performed by couriers, those who travelled the most rapidly taking eighteen days to get from Moscow to Irkutak. But this was the exception, and the journey through Asiatic Russia usually occupied from four to five weeks, even though every available means of transport was placed at the disposal of the Czar's messengers.

Michael Strogoff was a man who feared neither frost nor snow. He would have preferred travelling during the severe winter season, in order that he might perform the whole distance by sleighs. At that period of the year the difficulties which all other means of locomotion present are greatly diminished, the wide steppes being levelled by snow, while there are no rivers to cross, but simply sheets of glass, over which the sleigh glides rapidly and easily.

Perhaps certain natural phenomena are most to be feared at that time, such as long-continuing and dense fogs, excessive cold, fearfully heavy snow-storms, which sometimes envelop whole caravans and cause their destruction. Hungry wolves also roam over the plain in thousands. But it would have been better for Michael Strogoff to face these risks; for during the

winter the Tartar invaders would have been stationed in the towns, their marauding bands would not be overrunning the steppes, any movement of the troops would have been impracticable, and he could consequently have more easily performed his journey. But it was not in his power to choose either his own weather or his own time. Whatever were the circumstances, he must accept them and set out.

Such were the difficulties which Michael Strogoff boldly confronted and prepared to encounter.

In the first place, he must not travel as a courier of the Czar usually would. No one must even suspect what he really was. Spies swarm in a rebellious country; let him be recognised, and his mission would be in danger. Also, while supplying him with a large sum of money, which was sufficient for his journey, and would facilitate it in some measure, General Kisooff had not given him any document notifying that he was on the Emperor's service, which is the *Sesame par excellence*. He contented himself with furnishing him with a 'podorojna.'

This podorojna was made out in the name of Nicholas Korpanoff, merchant, living at Irkutak. It authorized Nicholas Korpanoff to be accompanied if requisite by one or more persons, and, moreover, it was, by special notification, made available in the event of the Muscovite government forbidding natives of any other countries to leave Russia.

The *podorojna* is simply a permission to take post-horses; but Michael Strogoff was not to use it unless he was sure that by so doing he would not excite suspicion as to his mission, that is to say, whilst he was on European territory. The consequence was that in Siberia, whilst traversing the insurgent provinces, he would have no power over the relays, either in the choice of horses in preference to others, or in demanding conveyances for his personal use; neither was Michael Strogoff to forget that he was no longer a courier, but a plain merchant, Nicholas Korpanoff, travelling from Moscow to Irkutsk, and, as such, exposed to all the impediments of an ordinary journey.

To pass unknown, more or less rapidly, but to pass somehow or other, such were the directions he had received.

Thirty years previously, the escort of a traveller of rank consisted of not less than two hundred mounted Cossacks, two hundred foot-soldiers, twenty-five Baskir horsemen, three hundred camels, four hundred horses, twenty-five waggons, two portable boats, and two pieces of cannon. All this was requisite for a journey in Siberia.

Michael Strogoff, however, had neither cannon, nor horsemen, nor foot-soldiers, nor beasts of burden. He would travel in a carriage or on horseback, when he could; on foot, when he could not.

There would be no difficulty in getting over the first fifteen hundred versts, the distance between Moscow and the Russian frontier. Railroads, post-carriages, steamboats, relays of horses, were at every one's disposal, and consequently at the disposal of the courier of the Czar.

Accordingly, on the morning of the 16th of July, having doffed his

uniform, with a knapsack on his back, dressed in the simple Russian costume, tightly fitting tunic, the traditional belt of the *Moujik*, wide trousers, gartered at the knees, and high boots, Michael Strogoff arrived at the station in time for the first train. He carried no arms, openly at least, but under his belt was hidden a revolver, and in his pocket, one of those large knives, resembling both a cutlass and a *yataghan*, with which a Siberian hunter can so neatly disembowel a bear, without injuring its precious fur.

A crowd of travellers had collected at the Moscow station. The stations on the Russian railroads are much used as places for meeting, not only by those who are about to proceed by the train, but by friends who come to see them off. It indeed resembles, from the variety of characters assembled, a small News Exchange.

The train in which Michael took his place was to set him down at Nijni-Novgorod. There terminated, at that time, the iron road which, uniting Moscow and St. Petersburg, will eventually continue to the Russian frontier. It was a journey of about four hundred versts, and the train would accomplish it in ten hours. Once arrived at Nijni-Novgorod, Strogoff would, according to circumstances, either take the land route or the steamer on the Volga, so as to reach the Ural Mountains as soon as possible.

Michael Strogoff ensconced himself in his corner, like a worthy citizen whose affairs go well with him, and who endeavours to kill time by sleep.

Nevertheless, as he was not alone in his compartment, he slept with one eye open, and listened with both his ears.

In fact, rumour of the rising of the Kirghiz hordes, and of the

Tartar invasion, had transpired in some degree. The occupants of the carriage, whom chance had made his travelling companions, discussed the subject, though with

larger number of persons in the train, were merchants on their way to the celebrated fair of Nijni-Novgorod. A very mixed assembly, composed of Jews, Turks,



that caution which has become habitual among Russians, who know that spies are ever on the watch for any treasonable expressions which may be uttered.

These travellers, as well as the

Cossacks, Russians, Georgians, Kalmucks, and others, but nearly all speaking the national tongue.

They discussed the pros and cons of the serious events which were taking place beyond the

Ural, and those merchants seemed to fear lest the government should be led to take certain restrictive measures, especially in the provinces bordering on the frontier—measures from which trade would certainly suffer.

It must be confessed that those selfish individuals thought only of the war, that is to say, the suppression of the revolt and the struggle against the invasion, from the single point of view of their threatened interests. The presence of a private soldier, clad in his uniform—and the importance of a uniform in Russia is great—would have certainly been enough to restrain the merchants' tongues. But in the compartment occupied by Michael Strogoff, there was no one who could even be suspected of being a military man, and the Czar's courier was not the person to betray himself. He listened, then.

'They say that caravan teas are up,' remarked a Persian, known by his cap of Astrakhan fur, and his ample brown robe, worn threadbare by use.

'Oh, there's no fear of teas falling,' answered an old Jew of sullen aspect. 'Those in the market at Nijni-Novgorod will be easily cleared off by the West; but, unfortunately, it won't be the same with Bokhara carpets.'

'What! are you expecting goods from Bokhara?' asked the Persian.

'No, but from Samarcand, and that is even more exposed. The idea of reckoning on the exports of a country in which the khans are in a state of revolt from Khiva to the Chinese frontier!'

'Well,' replied the Persian, 'if the carpets do not arrive, the drafts will not arrive either, I suppose.'

'And the profits, Father Abraham!' exclaimed the little Jew, 'do you reckon them as nothing?'

'You are right,' said another traveller; 'goods from Central Asia run a great risk of failing in the market, and it will be the same with the Samarcand carpets as with the wools, tallow, and shawls from the East.'

'Why, look out, little father,' said a Russian traveller, in a bantering tone; 'you'll grease your shawls terribly if you mix them up with your tallow.'

'That amuses you,' sharply answered the merchant, who had little relish for that sort of joke.

'Well, if you tear your hair, or throw ashes on your head,' replied the traveller, 'will that change the course of events? No; no more than the course of the Exchange.'

'One can easily see that you are not a merchant,' observed the little Jew.

'Faith, no, worthy son of Abraham! I sell neither hops, nor eider-down, nor honey, nor wax, nor hemp-seed, nor salt meat, nor caviare, nor wood, nor wool, nor ribbons, nor hemp, nor flax, nor morocco, nor furs. . . .'

'But do you buy them?' asked the Persian, interrupting the traveller's list.

'As little as I can, and only for my own private use,' answered the other, with a wink.

'He's a wag,' said the Jew to the Persian.

'Or a spy,' replied the other, lowering his voice. 'We had better take care, and not speak more than necessary. The police are not over-particular in these times, and you never can know with whom you are travelling.'

In another corner of the compartment they were speaking less of mercantile affairs, and more of the Tartar invasion and its annoying consequences.

'All the horses in Siberia will be requisitioned,' said a traveller,

'and communication between the different provinces of Central Asia will become very difficult.'

'Is it true,' asked his neighbour, 'that the Kirghiz of the middle horde have made common cause with the Tartars?'

'So it is said,' answered the traveller, lowering his voice; 'but who can flatter themselves that they know anything really of what is going on in this country?'

'I have heard speak of a concentration of troops on the frontier. The Don Cossacks have already gathered along the course of the Volga, and they are to be opposed to the rebel Kirghiz.'

'If the Kirghiz descend the Irtysh, the route to Irkutsk will not be safe,' observed his neighbour. 'Besides, yesterday I wanted to send a telegram to Krasnoïarsk, and it could not be forwarded. It's to be feared that before long the Tartar columns will have isolated Eastern Siberia.'

'In short, little father,' continued the first speaker, 'these merchants have good reason for being uneasy about their trade and transactions. After requisitioning the horses, they will requisition the boats, carriages, every means of transport, until the time will come when no one will be allowed to take even one step throughout all the empire.'

'I'm much afraid that the Nijni-Novgorod fair won't end as brilliantly as it has begun,' responded the other, shaking his head. 'But the safety and integrity of the Russian territory before everything. Business is only business.'

If in this compartment the subject of conversation varied but little—nor did it, indeed, in the other carriages of the train—in all it might have been observed that the talkers used much circumspection. When they did happen

to venture out of the region of facts, they never went so far as to attempt to divine the intentions of the Muscovite government, or even to criticise them.

This was especially remarked by a traveller in a carriage at the front part of the train. This person—evidently a stranger—made good use of his eyes, and asked numberless questions, to which he received only evasive answers. Every minute leaning out of the window, which he would keep down to the great disgust of his fellow-travellers, he lost nothing of the views to the right. He inquired the names of the most insignificant places, their position, what were their commerce, their manufactures, the number of their inhabitants, the average mortality, &c., and all this he wrote down in a note-book, already full of memoranda.

This was the correspondent Alcide Jolivet, and the reason of his putting so many insignificant questions was, that amongst the many answers he received, he hoped to find some interesting fact 'for his cousin.' But, naturally enough, he was taken for a spy, and not a word treating of the events of the day was uttered in his hearing.

Finding, therefore, that he could learn nothing in relation to the Tartar invasion, he wrote in his note-book: 'Travellers of great discretion. Very close as to political matters.'

Whilst Alcide Jolivet noted down his impressions thus minutely, his confrère, in the same train, travelling for the same object, was devoting himself to the same work of observation in another compartment. Neither of them had seen each other that day at the Moscow station, and they were each ignorant that the other had set out to visit the scene of the war. Harry

Blount, speaking little, but listening much, had not inspired his companions with the suspicions which Alcide Jolivet had aroused. He was not taken for a spy, and therefore his neighbours, without constraint, gossiped in his presence, allowing themselves even to go farther than their natural caution would in most cases have allowed them. The correspondent of the 'Daily Telegraph' had thus an opportunity of observing how much recent events preoccupied the party of merchants who were on their way to Nijni-Novgorod, and to what a degree the commerce with Central Asia was threatened in its transit.

He therefore did not hesitate to note in his book this perfectly correct observation:

'My fellow-travellers extremely anxious. Nothing is talked of but war, and they speak of it, with a freedom which is astonishing, as having broken out between the Volga and the Vistula.'

The readers of the 'Daily Telegraph' would not fail to be as well informed as Alcide Jolivet's 'cousin.'

And moreover, as Harry Blount, seated at the left of the train, only saw one part of the country, which was hilly, without giving himself the trouble of looking at the right side, which was composed of wide plains, he added, with British assurance:

'Country mountainous between Moscow and Wladimir.'

It was evident that the Russian government purposed taking severe measures to guard against any serious eventualities even in the interior of the empire. The rebellion had not crossed the Siberian frontier, but evil influences might be feared in the Volga provinces, so near to the country of the Kirghiz.

The police had as yet found no

traces of Ivan Ogareff. It was not known whether the traitor, calling in the foreigner to avenge his personal rancour, had rejoined Feofar-Khan, or whether he was endeavouring to foment a revolt in the government of Nijni-Novgorod, which at this time of year contained a population of such diverse elements. Perhaps among the Persians, Armenians, or Kalmucks, who flocked to the great market, he had agents, instructed to provoke a rising in the interior. All this was possible, especially in such a country as Russia. In fact, this vast empire, of 4,740,000 square miles in extent, does not possess the homogeneity of the states of Western Europe. Amongst the many nations of which it is composed, there exist necessarily many shades. The Russian territory in Europe, Asia, and America extends from the fifteenth degree east longitude to the hundred and thirty-third degree west longitude, or an extent of nearly two hundred degrees; and from the thirty-eighth south parallel to the eighty-first north parallel, or forty-three degrees. It contains more than seventy millions of inhabitants. In it thirty different languages are spoken. The Slavonian race predominates, no doubt, but there are besides Russians, Poles, Lithuanians, Courlanders. Add to these Finns, Laplanders, Esthonians, several other northern tribes with unpronounceable names, the Permiaks, the Germans, the Greeks, the Tartars, the Caucasian tribes, the Mongol, Kalmuck, Samoid, Kamtschatkan, and Aleutian hordes, and one may understand that the unity of so vast a state must have been difficult to maintain, and that it could only have been the work of time, aided by the wisdom of many successive rulers.

Be that as it may, Ivan Ogareff had hitherto managed to escape all search, and very probably he might have rejoined the Tartar army. But at every station where

Ogareff. The government, in fact, believed it to be certain that the traitor had not yet been able to quit European Russia. If there appeared cause to suspect any tra-



the train stopped, inspectors came forward who scrutinised the travellers and subjected them all to a minute examination, as, by order of the superintendent of police, these officials were seeking Ivan

veller, he was carried off to explain himself at the police station, and in the meantime the train went on its way, no person troubling himself about the unfortunate one left behind.

With the Russian police, which is very arbitrary, it is absolutely useless to argue. Military rank is conferred on its employes, and they act in military fashion. How can any one, moreover, help obeying, unhesitatingly, orders which emanate from a monarch who has the right to employ this formula at the head of his ukase:—'We, by the grace of God, Emperor and Autocrat of all the Russias, of Moscow, Kiev, Wladimir, and Novgorod, Czar of Kasan and Astrakhan, Czar of Poland, Czar of Siberia, Czar of the Tauric Chersonese, Seigneur of Pskov, Prince of Smolensk, Lithuania, Volkynia, Podolia and Finland, Prince of Esthonia, Livonia, Courland and of Semigallia, of Bialystok, Karelia, Sougria, Perm, Viatka, Bulgaria, and of many other countries; Lord and sovereign Prince of the territory of Nijni-Novgorod, Tchemigoff, Riazan, Polotsk, Rostov, Jaroslavl, Bielozersk, Ondoria, Obdoria, Kondinia, Vitepsk, and of Mstislaf, Governor of the Hyperborean Regions, Lord of the countries of Iveria, Kartalinia, Grouzinia, Kabardinia, and Armenia, hereditary Lord and Suzerain of the Scherkess princes, of those of the mountains and of others; heir of Norway, Duke of Schleswig-Holstein, Stormarn, Dittmarsen, and Oldenburg.' A powerful lord, in truth, is he whose arms are an eagle with two heads, holding a sceptre and a globe, surrounded by the escutcheons of Novgorod, Wladimir, Kiev, Kasan, Astrakhan, and of Siberia, and environed by the collar of the order of St. Andrew, surmounted by a royal crown!

As to Michael Strogoff, his papers were in order, and he was, consequently, free from all police supervision.

At the station of Wladimir the train stopped for several minutes,

which appeared sufficient to enable the correspondent of 'The Daily Telegraph' to take a twofold view, physical and moral, and to form a complete estimate of this ancient capital of Russia.

At the Wladimir station fresh travellers entered the train. Among others, a young girl presented herself at the door of the compartment occupied by Michael Strogoff.

A vacant place was found opposite the courier of the Czar. The young girl took it, after placing by her side a modest travelling-bag of red leather, which seemed to constitute all her luggage. Then seating herself with downcast eyes, not even glancing at the fellow-travellers whom chance had given her, she prepared for a journey which was still to last several hours.

Michael Strogoff could not help looking attentively at his newly-arrived fellow-traveller. As she was so placed as to travel with her back to the engine, he even offered her his seat, which she might prefer to her own, but she thanked him with a slight bend of her graceful neck.

The young girl appeared to be about sixteen or seventeen years of age. Her head, truly charming, was of the purest Slavonic type—slightly severe, and which would, when a few summers should have passed over her, unfold into beauty rather than mere prettiness. From beneath a sort of kerchief which she wore on her head escaped in profusion light golden hair. Her eyes were brown, soft, and expressive of much sweetness of temper. The nose was straight, and attached to her pale and somewhat thin cheeks by delicately mobile nostrils. The lips were finely cut, but it seemed as if they had long since forgotten how to smile.

The young traveller was tall

and upright, as well as could be judged of her figure from the very simple and ample pelisse that covered her. Although she was still a very young girl in the literal

this young girl had already suffered in the past, and the future doubtless did not present itself to her in glowing colours; but it was none the less certain that she



sense of the term, the development of her high forehead and clearly-cut features gave the idea that she was the possessor of great moral energy—a point which did not escape Michael Strogoff. Evidently

had known how to struggle, and that she had resolved to struggle still with the trials of life. Her energy was evidently both prompt and persistent, and her calmness unalterable, even under circum-

stances in which a man would be likely to give way or lose his self-command.

Such was the impression which she produced at first sight. Michael Strogoff, being himself of an energetic temperament, was naturally struck by the character of her physiognomy, and while taking care not to cause her annoyance by a too persistent gaze, he observed his neighbour with no small interest. The costume of the young traveller was both extremely simple and appropriate. She was not rich—that could be easily seen; but not the slightest mark of negligence was to be discerned in her dress. All her luggage was contained in a leather bag under lock and key, and which, for want of room, she held on her lap.

She wore a long, dark pelisse, which was gracefully adjusted at the neck by a blue tie. Under this pelisse, a short skirt, also dark, fell over a robe which reached to the ankles, and of which the lower edge was ornamented with some simple embroidery. Half-boots of worked leather, and thickly soled, as if chosen in the anticipation of a long journey, covered her small feet.

Michael Strogoff fancied that he recognised, by certain details, the fashion of the costume of Livonia, and he thought that his neighbour must be a native of the Baltic provinces.

But whither was this young girl going, alone, at an age when the fostering care of a father, or the protection of a brother, are considered a matter of necessity? Had she now come, after an already long journey, from the provinces of Western Russia? Was she merely going to Nijni-Novgorod, or was the end of her travels beyond the eastern frontiers of the

empire? Would some relation, some friend, await her arrival by the train? Or was it not more probable, on the contrary, that she would find herself as much isolated in the town as she was in this compartment, where no one—she must think—appeared to care for her? It was probable.

In fact, the effect of habits contracted in solitude was clearly manifested in the bearing of the young girl. The manner in which she entered the carriage and prepared herself for the journey, the slight disturbance she caused among those around her, the care she took not to incommode or give trouble to any one, all showed that she was accustomed to be alone, and to depend on herself only.

Michael Strogoff observed her with interest, but, himself reserved, he sought no opportunity of accosting her, although several hours must elapse before the arrival of the train at Nijni-Novgorod.

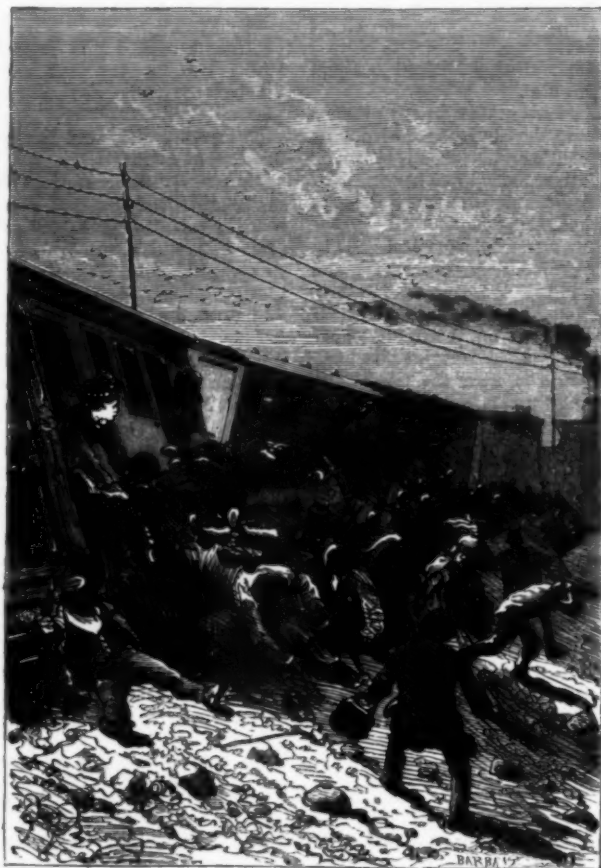
Once only, when her neighbour—the merchant who had jumbled together so imprudently in his remarks tallow and shawls—being asleep, and threatening her with his great head, which was swaying from one shoulder to the other, Michael Strogoff awoke him somewhat roughly, and made him understand that he must hold himself upright and in a more convenient posture.

The merchant, rude enough by nature, grumbled some words against 'people who interfere with what does not concern them,' but Michael Strogoff cast on him a glance so stern that the sleeper leant on the opposite side, and relieved the young traveller from his unpleasant vicinity.

The latter looked at the young man for an instant, and mute and modest thanks were in that look.

But a circumstance occurred which gave Michael Strogoff a just idea of the character of the maiden. Twelve versts before arriving at the station of Nijni-

about, cries, confusion, general disorder in the carriages, such was the effect at first produced. It was to be feared that some serious accident had happened. Consec-



Novgorod, at a sharp curve of the iron way, the train experienced a very violent shock. Then, for a minute, it ran on to the slope of an embankment.

Travellers more or less shaken

quently, even before the train had stopped, the doors were opened, and the panic-stricken passengers thought only of getting out of the carriages and taking refuge on the line.

Michael Strogoff thought instantly of the young girl; but, while the passengers in her compartment were precipitating themselves outside, screaming and struggling, she had remained quietly in her place, her face scarcely changed by a slight pallor.

She waited — Michael Strogoff waited also.

She had not made any attempt to leave the carriage. Nor did he move either.

Both remained quiet.

'A determined nature!' thought Michael Strogoff.

However, all danger had quickly disappeared. A breakage of the coupling of the luggage-van had first caused the shock to, and then the stoppage of, the train, which in another instant would have been thrown from the top of the embankment into a bog. There was an hour's delay. At last, the road being cleared, the train proceeded, and at half-past eight in the evening arrived at the station of Nijni-Novgorod.

Before any one could get out of the carriages, the inspectors of police presented themselves at the doors and examined the passengers.

Michael Strogoff showed his *podorojna*, made out in the name of Nicholas Korpanoff. He had consequently no difficulty.

As to the other travellers in the compartment, all bound for Nijni-Novgorod, their appearance, happily for them, was in nowise suspicious.

The young girl, in her turn, exhibited, not a passport, since passports are no longer required in Russia, but a permit indorsed with a private seal, and which seemed to be of a special character. The inspector read the permit with attention. Then, having attentively examined the

person whose description it contained:

'You are from Riga?' he said.

'Yes,' replied the young girl.

'You are going to Irkutak?'

'Yes.'

'By what route?'

'By Perm.'

'Good!' replied the inspector.

'Take care to have your permit viséd at the police station of Nijni-Novgorod.'

The young girl bent her head in token of assent.

Hearing these questions and replies, Michael Strogoff experienced a mingled sentiment both of surprise and pity. What! this young girl, alone, journeying to that far-off Siberia, and at a time when, to its ordinary dangers, were added all the perils of an invaded country and one in a state of insurrection! How would she reach it? What would become of her?

The inspection ended, the doors of the carriages were then opened, but before Michael Strogoff could move towards her the young Livonian, who had been the first to descend, had disappeared in the crowd which thronged the platforms of the railway station.

CHAPTER V.

THE TWO ANNOUNCEMENTS.

NIJNI-NOVGOROD, Lower Novgorod, situate at the junction of the Volga and the Oka, is the chief town in the district of the same name. It was here that Michael Strogoff was obliged to leave the railway, which at the time did not go beyond that town. Thus, as he advanced, his travelling would become first less speedy and then less safe.

Nijni-Novgorod, the fixed population of which is only from thirty

to thirty-five thousand inhabitants, contained at that time more than three hundred thousand; that is to say, the population was increased tenfold. This addition was in consequence of the celebrated fair, which was held within the walls for three weeks. Formerly Makariew had the benefit of this concourse of traders, but since 1817 the fair had been removed to Nijni-Novgorod.

The town, dreary enough at most times, then presented a truly animated scene. Six different races of merchants, European and Asiatic, were fraternising under the congenial influence of trade.

Even at the late hour at which Michael Strogoff left the platform, there was still a large number of people in the two towns, separated by the stream of the Volga, which compose Nijni-Novgorod, and the highest of which is built on a steep rock, and is defended by one of those forts called in Russia 'krenil.'

Had Michael Strogoff been obliged to stay at Nijni-Novgorod, he would have had some trouble in finding an hotel, or even an inn, to suit him. In the meantime, as he had not to start immediately, for he was going to take a steamer, he was compelled to look out for some lodging; but, before doing so, he wished to know exactly the hour at which the steamboat would start. He went to the office of the company whose boats plied between Nijni-Novgorod and Perm. There, to his great annoyance, he found that the 'Caucasus'—for that was the boat's name—did not start for Perm till the following day at twelve o'clock. Seventeen hours to wait! It was very vexatious to a man so pressed for time. However, he resigned himself to circumstances, for he never senselessly murmured. Besides, the fact was that no telegue or ta-

rantass, berlin or postchaise, nor horse could take him more quickly either to Perm or Kasan. It would be better, then, to wait for the steamer, a mode of conveyance far more rapid than any other, and which would enable him to regain lost time.

Here, then, was Michael Strogoff strolling through the town and quietly looking out for some inn in which to pass the night. However, he troubled himself little on this score, and, but that hunger pressed him, he would probably have wandered on till morning in the streets of Nijni-Novgorod. He was looking for supper rather than a bed. But he found both at the sign of the 'City of Constantinople.' There, the landlord offered him a fairly comfortable room, with little furniture, it is true, but which was not without an image of the Virgin, and portraits of a few saints framed in yellow gauze.

A goose filled with sour stuffing swimming in thick cream, barley bread, some curds, powdered sugar mixed with cinnamon, and a jug of kwass, the ordinary Russian beer, were placed before him, and sufficed to satisfy his hunger. He did justice to the meal, which was more than could be said of his neighbour at table, who, having, in his character of 'old believer' of the sect of Raskalniks, made the vow of abstinence, rejected the potatoes on the dish in front of him, and carefully refrained from putting sugar in his tea.

His supper finished, Michael Strogoff, instead of going up to his bedroom, again strolled out into the town. But, although the long twilight yet lingered, the crowd was already dispersing, the streets were gradually becoming empty, and at length every one retired to his dwelling.

Why did not Michael Strogoff

go quietly to bed, as would have seemed more reasonable after a long railway journey? Was he thinking of the young Livonian girl who had for so many hours been his travelling companion? Having nothing better to do, he was thinking of her. Did he fear that, lost in this busy city, she might be exposed to insult? He feared so, and with good reason. Did he hope to meet her, and, if need were, to afford her protection? No. To meet would be difficult. As to protection—that right had he—

‘Alone,’ he said to himself, ‘alone, in the midst of these wandering tribes! And yet the present dangers are nothing compared to those she must undergo. Siberia! Irkutsk! I am about to dare all risks for Russia, for the Czar, while she is about to do so—For whom? For what? She is authorized to cross the frontier! And the country beyond is in revolt! The steppes are full of Tartar bands!’

Michael Strogoff stopped for an instant, and reflected.

‘Without doubt,’ thought he, ‘she must have determined on undertaking her journey before the invasion. Perhaps she is even now ignorant of what is happening. But no; that cannot be, for the merchants discussed before her the disturbances in Siberia—and she did not seem surprised. She did not even ask for an explanation. She must have known it then, and, though knowing it, she is still resolute. Poor girl! Her motive for the journey must be urgent indeed! But though she may be brave—and she certainly is so—her strength must fail her, and, to say nothing of dangers and obstacles, she will be unable to endure the fatigue of such a journey. Never can she pass Irkutsk!’

Indulging in such reflections, Michael Strogoff wandered on as chance led him; but, being well acquainted with the town, he knew that he could, without difficulty, retrace his steps.

Having strolled on for about an hour, he seated himself on a bench against the wall of a large wooden cottage, which stood, with many others, on a vast open space.

He had scarcely been there five minutes when a hand was laid heavily on his shoulder.

‘What are you doing here?’ roughly demanded a tall and powerful man, who had approached unperceived.

‘I am resting,’ replied Michael Strogoff.

‘Do you mean to stay all night on the bench?’ asked the man.

‘Yes, if I feel inclined to do so,’ answered Michael Strogoff, in a tone somewhat too sharp for the simple merchant he wished to personate.

‘Come forward, then, that I may see you,’ said the man.

Michael Strogoff, remembering that, above all things, prudence was necessary, instinctively drew back.

‘It is not necessary,’ he replied; and he calmly stepped back ten paces or so.

The man seemed, as Michael observed him well, to have the look of a Bohemian, such as are met at fairs, and with whom contact, either physical or moral, is unpleasant. Then, as he looked more attentively through the dusk which was coming on, he perceived, near the cottage, a large caravan, the usual travelling dwelling of the Zingaris or gipsies who swarm in Russia wherever a few copecks can be obtained.

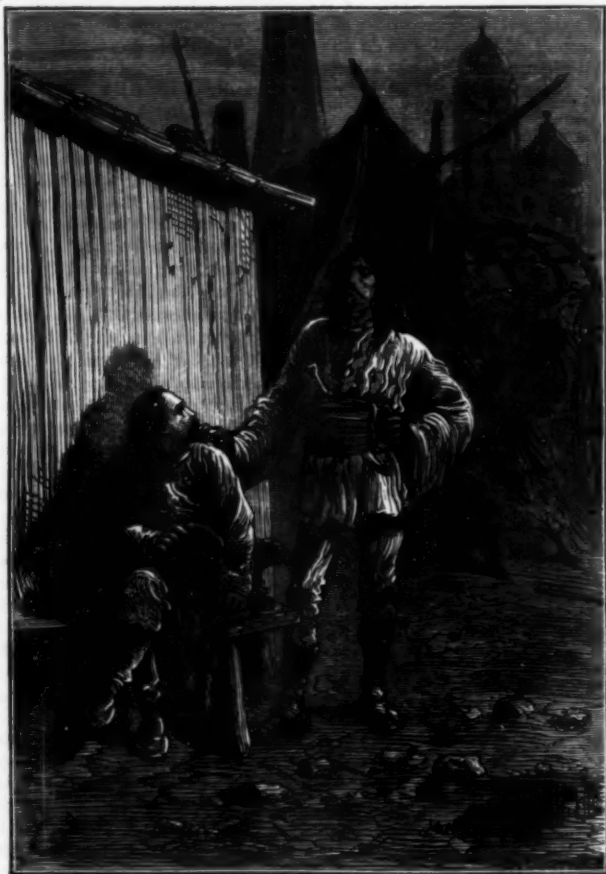
As the gipsy took two or three steps forward, and was about to interrogate Michael Strogoff more closely, the door of the cottage was opened. He could just see a

woman, who advanced quickly, and in a language which Michael Strogoff knew to be a mixture of the Mongol and Siberian:

'Another spy!' she said. 'Let

smiling at the epithet bestowed on him, dreading spies as he did above all things.

But in the same dialect, although his accent was very dif-



him alone, and come to supper. The "papluka"* is waiting for you.'

Michael Strogoff could not help

ferent, the Bohemian replied in words which signify:

'You are right, Sangarre! Besides, we start to-morrow.'

'To-morrow?' repeated the woman in a tone of surprise.

Z

* A kind of light cake.

'Yes, Sangarro,' replied the Bohemian; 'to-morrow, and the Father himself sends us—where we are going!'

Thereupon the man and woman entered the cottage, and carefully closed the door.

'Good!' said Michael Strogoff, to himself; 'if these gipsies do not wish to be understood, when they speak before me, they had better use some other language.'

From his Siberian origin, and because he had passed his childhood in the Steppes, Michael Strogoff, it has been said, understood almost all the languages in usage from Tartary to the Sea of Ice. As to the exact signification of the words exchanged between the gipsy and his companion, he did not trouble his head. For why should it interest him?

It was already late when he thought of returning to his inn to take some repose. He followed, as he did so, the course of the Volga, whose waters were almost hidden under the countless number of boats floating on its bosom.

By the direction of the river he knew the spot which he had just left. This collection of caravans and cottages occupied the great square in which was held, year by year, the principal market of Nijni-Novgorod, and this explained the assemblage in the square of these mountebanks and gipsies from all quarters of the world.

An hour after, Michael Strogoff was sleeping soundly on one of those Russian beds which always seem so hard to strangers, and on the morrow, the 17th of July, he awoke at break of day.

He had still five hours to pass in Nijni-Novgorod; it seemed to him an age. How was he to spend the morning unless in wandering, as he had done the evening before, through the streets? By the time he had finished his breakfast,

strapped up his bag, had his podorojna inspected at the police office, he would have nothing to do but start. But he was not a man to lie in bed after the sun had risen, so he rose, dressed himself, placed the letter with the imperial arms on it carefully at the bottom of its usual pocket within the lining of his coat, over which he fastened his belt; he then closed his bag and threw it over his shoulder. This done, he had no wish to return to the 'City of Constantinople,' and intending to breakfast on the bank of the Volga near the wharf, he settled his bill and left the inn. By way of precaution, Michael Strogoff went first to the office of the steam-packet company, and there made sure that the 'Caucasus' would start at the appointed hour. As he did so, the thought for the first time struck him that, since the young Livonian girl was going to Perm, it was very possible that her intention was also to embark in the 'Caucasus,' in which case he should accompany her.

The town above with its kremlin, whose circumference measures two versts, and which resembles that of Moscow, was altogether abandoned. Even the governor did not reside there. But if the town above was like a city of the dead, the town below, at all events, was alive.

Michael Strogoff, having crossed the Volga on a bridge of boats, guarded by mounted Cossacks, reached the square where the evening before he had fallen in with the gipsy camp. This was somewhat outside the town, where the fair of Nijni-Novgorod was held, with which that of Leipzig itself is not to be compared. In a vast plain beyond the Volga rose the temporary palace of the governor-general, where by imperial orders that great functionary re-

sided during the whole of the fair, which, thanks to the people who composed it, required an ever-watchful surveillance.

This plain was now covered with booths symmetrically arranged in such a manner as to leave avenues broad enough to allow the crowd to pass without a crush.

Each group of these booths, of all sizes and shapes, formed a separate quarter particularly dedicated to some special branch of commerce. There was the iron quarter, the furriers' quarter, the woollen quarter, the quarter of the wood merchants, the weavers' quarter, the dried fish quarter, &c. Some booths were even built of fancy materials, some of bricks of tea, others of masses of salt meat—that is to say, of samples of the goods which the owners thus announced were there to the purchasers—a singular, and somewhat American, mode of advertisement.

In the avenues and long alleys there was already a large assemblage of people, the sun, which had risen at four o'clock, being well above the horizon. Russians, Siberians, Germans, Cossacks, Turcomans, Persians, Georgians, Greeks, Turks, Hindoos, Chinese, an extraordinary mixture of Europeans and Asiatics, talking, wrangling, haranguing, and bargaining. Everything which can be bought or sold seemed to be heaped up in this square. Porters, horses, camels, asses, boats, caravans, every description of conveyance that would serve for the transport of merchandise had been accumulated on the fair-ground. Furs, precious stones, silks, Cashmere shawls, Turkey carpets, weapons from the Caucasus, gauzes from Smyrna and Ispahan, Tiflis armour, caravan teas, European bronzes, Swiss clocks, velvets and

silks from Lyons, English cottons, harness, fruits, vegetables, minerals from the Ural, malachite, lapis-lazuli, spices, perfumes, medicinal herbs, wood, tar, rope, horn, pumpkins, water-melons, &c. All the products of India, China, Persia, from the shores of the Caspian and the Black Sea, from America and Europe, were united at this corner of the globe.

It is scarcely possible truly to portray the moving mass of human beings surging here and there, the excitement, the confusion, the hubbub; demonstrative as were the natives and the inferior classes, they were completely outdone by their visitors. There were merchants from Central Asia, who had occupied a year in escorting their merchandise across its vast plains, and who would not again see their shops and counting-houses for another year to come. In short, of such importance is this fair of Nijni-Novgorod, that the sum total of its transactions amounts yearly to not less than a hundred million roubles.*

On one of the open spaces between the quarters of this temporary city were numbers of mountebanks of every description; harlequins and acrobats, deafening the visitors with the noise of their instruments and their vociferous cries. Gipsies from the mountains telling fortunes to the credulous fools who are ever to be found in such assemblies; Zingaris or Tsiganes—a name which the Russians give to the gipsies who are the descendants of the ancient Copts—singing their wildest melodies and dancing their most original dances; comedians of foreign theatres acting Shakespeare, adapted to the taste of spectators who crowded to witness them. In the long avenues the bear showmen accompanied

* About 15,720,000*l.* sterling.

their four-footed dancers, menageries resounded with the hoarse cries of animals under the influence of the stinging whip or red-hot irons of the tamer; and, besides all these numberless per-

ground, as on the deck of their vessel, imitating the action of rowing, guided by the stick of the master of the orchestra, the veritable helmsman of this imaginary vessel!



formers, in the middle of the central square, surrounded by a circle four deep of enthusiastic amateurs, was a band of 'mariners of the Volga,' sitting on the

A whimsical and pleasing custom!

Suddenly, according to a time-honoured observance in the fair of Nijni-Novgorod, above the heads

of the vast concourse a flock of birds were allowed to escape from the cages in which they had been brought to the spot. In return for a few coopeks charitably offered by some good people, the bird-fanciers opened the prison doors of their captives, who flew out in hundreds, uttering their joyous notes.

It should here be mentioned that England and France, at all events, were this year represented at the great fair of Nijni-Novgorod by two of the most distinguished products of modern civilisation, Messrs. Harry Blount and Alcide Jolivet.

Alcide Jolivet, an optimist by nature, seemed to find everything agreeable, and as by chance both lodging and food were to his taste, he jotted down in his book some memoranda particularly favourable to the town of Nijni-Novgorod.

Harry Blount, on the contrary, having in vain hunted for a supper, had been obliged to find a resting-place in the open air. He therefore looked at it all from another point of view, and was preparing an article of the most withering character against a town in which the landlords of the inns refused to receive travellers who only begged leave to be flayed, 'morally and physically.'

Michael Strogoff, one hand in his pocket, the other holding his cherry-stemmed pipe, appeared the most indifferent and least impatient of men; yet, from a certain contraction of his eyebrows every now and then, a careful observer would have perceived that he was burning to be off.

For about two hours he had been walking about the streets, only to find himself invariably at the fair again. As he passed among the groups of buyers and sellers he discovered that those who came from countries on the

confines of Asia manifested great uneasiness. Their trade was visibly suffering from it.

Another symptom also was to be remarked. In Russia military uniforms appear on every occasion. Soldiers are wont to mix freely with the crowd, the police agents being almost invariably aided by a number of Cossacks, who, lance on shoulder, keep order in the crowd of three hundred thousand strangers.

But on this occasion the soldiers, Cossacks and the rest, did not put in an appearance at the great market. Doubtless, a sudden order to move having been foreseen, they were restricted to their barracks.

Nevertheless, though no soldiers were to be seen, it was not so with their officers. Since the evening before, aides-de-camp, leaving the governor's palace, galloped in every direction. An unusual movement was going forward which a serious state of affairs could alone account for. There were innumerable couriers on the roads both to Wladimir and to the Ural Mountains. The exchange of telegraphic despatches between Moscow and St. Petersburg was incessant.

Michael Strogoff found himself in the central square when the report spread that the head of police had been summoned by a courier to the palace of the governor-general. An important despatch from Moscow, it was said, was the cause of it.

'The fair is to be closed,' said one.

'The regiment of Nijni-Novgorod has received the route,' declared another.

'They say that the Tartars menace Tomsk!'

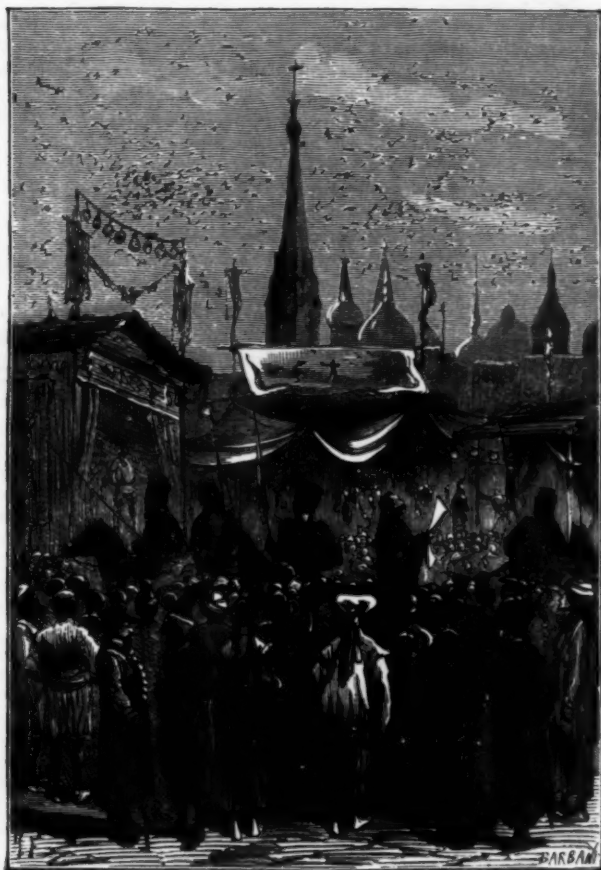
'Here is the head of police!' was shouted on every side.

A loud clapping of hands was

suddenly raised, which subsided by degrees, and finally was succeeded by absolute silence. The head of police arrived in the middle of the central square, and it was

'By order of the Governor of Nijni-Novgorod.

'1st. All Russian subjects are forbidden to quit the province upon any pretext whatsoever.



seen by all that he held in his hand a despatch.

Then, in a loud voice, he read the following announcements:—

'2nd. All strangers of Asiatic origin are commanded to leave the province within twenty-four hours.'

(To be continued.)

LOVE'S SPELLING BEE.

ONE balmy eve in Phyllis' bower
 With Phyllis at my knee,
 I said, 'My dear, be you my Flower,
 And I will be your Bee.'

But she withstay'd my eager arm,
 And said, 'I know full well
 You've learned, dear Damon, how to charm,
 But, Damon, can you spell?'

I rash essayed the trial new,
 And she with finger raised
 And brow severe: 'Your faith so true,
 Your faith so much be-praised—

'Spell "Faith,"' she said. And I began
 With F, and faltered A,
 Then T and H.—'O foolish man!'
 I quickly heard her say,

'To hold a faith without an "eye"—
 And how more foolish we—
 We women who will waste and sigh
 For faith that cannot see.'

Then I replied, 'If love is blind,
 Why should not faith be so?
 For true love hath no fault to find,
 Nor faith a doubt can know.

'But, Phyllis dear, my spelling flower,
 'Tis now your turn to prove,
 And fitly for to test your power,
 Come, spell me, Phyllis, Love!'

'That were an easy word to spell,'
 She cried out eagerly,
 And said, 'I spell my love with L,
 And U, and V, and E.'

'O foolish woman!' quick I cried,
 'Not O?'—But lively shame
 So filled her face that joy and pride
 Forbade the words of blame.

Around my neck her arms she flung,
 And whispered quietly,
 'Your O is nought, but without "you"
 All love were nought to me.'

W. COSMO MONKHOUSE.

HE WOULD BE A SOLDIER!

BY R. MOUNTENEY JEPHSON, AUTHOR OF 'TOM BULLKLEY OF LISBINGTON,'
'THE GIRL HE LEFT BEHIND HIM,' ETC.

CHAPTER IV.

IN anticipation and preparation the days passed quickly away, and it was now nearly time for Verisopht to obey his country's call to duty. As the hour of separation drew near he became the recipient of many suitable gifts from a large circle of friends and relatives. Many of these presents were handsome and costly, but none of them awakened such heartfelt gratitude as the more simple and homely souvenirs from his brothers and sisters. Fanny worked for him a banner screen emblazoned with the family arms, 'pieman rampant' and 'son of a sea-cook hornpipant,' and with the motto 'Semper virens,' worked in appropriately coloured silk; Carry made him a teapot cosy, a pair of slippers, and an anti-macassar; Peter presented him with his translation, in his own handwriting, from Caesar, neatly bound in brown paper; and the twins, who came next, pressed on his acceptance their little all, a small hutch containing a brace of guinea-pigs.

'Though I cannot see what possible use the guinea-pigs will be to Verisopht,' reasoned Mr. Boomershine within himself, 'still it is better to let the twins give what they prize most. Liberality with what is not theirs will come easily enough; but liberality with what is will not be so easily acquired; and the quality cannot be encouraged too early. If I were to give them a couple of pounds to buy some little present for Verisopht, there would be no

real generosity on their part. It would merely be a present from me through them. By all means then,' observed Mr. Boomershine, as he buttoned up the two pounds in his pocket, and thought of the fruitful source of dirt and tears that would depart with the guinea-pigs—'by all means, then, let me foster this spirit of true generosity. The only worldly possessions to which the younger members of my family may be said to hold undisputed title consist mainly of live stock—rabbits, kittens, and silkworms; and I do think,' argued Mr. Boomershine, as he recalled the oft-experienced sensation of treading on a fine fat silkworm, or sitting on a lively kitten, 'this would be a favourable opportunity of implanting in their little bosoms the germs of true generosity—that is, giving away what is their own.'

Luckily for Verisopht, the germs were not planted, for the 'little bosoms,' on the attempt being made, proved too hard and stony ground for the operation.

There was a great deal of surmise and conjecture throughout the whole family as to what 'Aunt Millicent's' present would be. Aunt Millicent was Mrs. Boomershine's aunt, a Miss Simple. She was thus Verisopht's great-aunt. She was also his godmother. She was also a spinster. She was also rich. Altogether, then, it was expected that Aunt Millicent would come down handsome on the occasion. On this supposition, the carrier's cart, which passed at

the bottom of the drive, was watched every evening with eager eyes. It never deposited, however, any precious burden, but either went on its way unheeding, or else merely stopped to deliver some lowly article of a household nature. This delay, instead of damping, on the contrary, inflamed the general expectation to such a pitch, that had a troop of white elephants, laden with precious stones, turned into the drive, the spectacle would have excited but little astonishment amongst the younger members of the family, who would at once have attributed it to Aunt Millicent's generosity.

At last, the very morning before Verisopht was to start, the postman brought a letter directed to him in the well-known stiff and minute handwriting of Aunt Millicent. The family were at breakfast, and they all watched Verisopht with breathless interest. Here was the present at last, or, at any rate, the herald of its approach!

Verisopht opened the envelope carefully, so as not to damage the cheque or bank-note for a fabulous amount which, doubtless, lurked within. But neither cheque nor note was there.

'Read it out, Verry, my boy,' said Mr. Boomershine, composing himself to listen.

Verry obeyed.

'DEAR VERISOPHT,

'You are going to be a soldier. For my own part I would sooner you had been a tinker or a tailor, as those paths of life, if lowly, are yet comparatively free from the temptations which beset the one you have chosen. However, though not approving of your choice, I have the same affection for you as ever; and so strong is my desire for your welfare, that the gift I am about to

confer on you is one requiring a great sacrifice on my part——'

"Great sacrifice," thought Mr. Boomershine, 'why it must be an enormous sum!' and the tears of gratitude almost stood in his eye as he interpolated: 'Aunt Millicent is a thorough Christian. Although I do not hold with her in her opinion concerning your profession, still I will say this of her, nothing can stifle her generosity. Proceed, Verry, my boy.'

Verisopht himself was visibly affected as he continued:

'Now, my dear Verry, I know you will value my present, not only for the sake of the donor, but also for the sake of the dear bird himself——'

'The what?' asked the family, in one breath.

'The bird,' faltered Verisopht.

'Proceed,' said Mr. Boomershine, in a voice hollow and weak.

'Yes, Verisopht, for your sake, I am about to part with what money would never have tempted, nor violence extorted, from me—my grey parrot, Mentor. And I will tell you why. He is no silly creature, perpetually inviting attention to his own beauty, or bidding maids in familiar terms to put the kettle on or take it off again. There is none of this foolish levity about him. It has been my pleasure for years to teach him a choice collection of moral precepts and admonitions; and amidst those temptations to which your future mode of life will expose you, in the vortex of vain frivolities, amidst the ribald jests and the ready oaths of a licentious soldiery, his peaceful utterances will fall on your ears with a sweet and purifying effect. You will receive him by a special messenger soon after you get this. My heart is too full to write more.

'Your affectionate aunt,

'MILLCENT SIMPLE.

'P.S.—I have just parted from him. His last words were, "Be temperate in all things." He doubtlessly alluded to my grief. He is indeed a virtuous bird. Take care of him. A lump of sugar and the enunciation of his name, "Mentor," in a soothing tone of voice will bring him to your finger. You might occasionally hang him up amongst the soldiers with beneficial results to them—poor benighted ones! Bless you!'

In the course of the day Mentor arrived, and Verisopht, on introducing himself to 'the virtuous bird' on the principles given in his aunt's postscript, found that he not only came to his finger with surprising alacrity, but also left a deep mark of his esteem upon it.

CHAPTER V.

WE will not dwell on the parting between Verisopht and the family. He may or may not have shed a soldier's tear on the occasion; but that he *did* do so red-hot pincers will not extort from us. We will admit that for the first few miles of the railway journey up to Paddington the tip of his nose and his eyelids were red, but farther than that we will not go.

Mr. Boomershire accompanied him as far as London, with the intention of seeing him fairly started from Waterloo Station; for Verisopht, even under the most favourable circumstances, had already evinced a surprising aptitude for getting into wrong trains, losing his ticket, and leaving his property behind him.

The heavy luggage had been forwarded to its destination by goods train; but notwithstanding this our hero's baggage formed a very imposing pile. Besides the

usual portmanteaux and hat-boxes, there were dressing-bags, despatch-boxes, uniform-cases, and all these, together with Mentor in his cage, and the guinea-pigs in their hutch, constituted a very serious impediment to rapid locomotion. The consequence was that as the two cabs, chartered for the journey between Paddington and Waterloo, crawled in at one end of the latter station, Verisopht's train gracefully glided out at the other. This was the 5 o'clock train, and there was nothing for it but to wait until the 8.30 one. Losing the train was provoking, but still there was one thing to be grateful for, and that was, it afforded Mr. Boomershire ample time to settle the claims of the cabmen without that injustice which might otherwise have been done them in the confusion of a hurried departure. The feelings of one of these hard-worked and virtuous men had been outraged by Mentor, who, from his position on the roof of the cab, had uttered certain temperance doctrines not in accordance with his views, and Mr. Boomershire would have been no tolerant Christian had he withheld the half-guinea demanded as compensation for wounded feelings. The other cabman, too, was a worthy fellow. He certainly did admit in homely language—rough, honest soul—that his 'crock might 'a come along a bit faster, but the fact was he couldn't find it in 'is 'eart to 'it 'im,' and, alas, the scant remuneration he received from an ungenerous public would not admit of his buying a better one. Base indeed that mortal who could have turned a deaf ear to this, and the appeal went straight to Mr. Boomershire's waistcoat pocket.

Nothing could now exceed the civility of the porters who had witnessed the whole transaction.

Indeed they quite squabbled amongst themselves, simple-minded fellows, for the honour of carrying Mr. Boomershine's luggage, and crowded round with obsequious cap-touchings and civil cries of 'Where to, sir?'

'Aldershot,' replied Mr. Boomershine, with a pleasant sort of idea that they took him for a general, travelling down to the camp attended by his *aide-de-camp*.

The luggage was soon labelled and piled up to await the next train, and Mr. Boomershine enlisted the porters in the cause of its safe custody in much the same way as a recruit is enlisted in the service of his country. He was pleased to remark that there was no grasping avarice about these men, no ostentatious holding out of hands; but, on the contrary, each received his remuneration in an unobtrusive manner that made Mr. Boomershine quite regret that the station-master, who stood near, had not witnessed their delicacy of feeling.

The object was now to while away the next three hours, and, with this in view, Mr. Boomershine and Verisopht started off towards the Strand. It was an unfortunate hour. It was too late for those calm joys afforded by the Monument, the British Museum, and St. Paul's Cathedral; and too early for the theatres and other places of amusement; so the business on hand resolved itself into first doing the shop-windows in the Strand, and then having a quiet dinner at the Charing Cross Hotel.

When they had satisfactorily concluded this last act, they proceeded once more to Waterloo Station, and here they found a great many young men, all smoking, laughing, and talking, and walking up and down the platform, awaiting the departure of the train. There was a something

about them that told Verisopht and his father that they were young officers on their way down to Aldershot, and, amongst others, they particularly noticed one who seemed on good terms with himself and every one else. There was no time, however, to be wasted, and they proceeded at once to look after the luggage. There it was, a goodly pile. But, consternation! where was Mentor?

'They sought him above; they sought him below;
They sought him with feelings of grief
and of woe.'

But, alas, they sought him in vain. The precious moments were waning fast, and still they searched without success. One porter solemnly averred that he had affixed a label to a bar of his cage, and had seen him 'all right on the platform after the gents left the station.' They were just giving up the search in despair, when a moral precept was heard to proceed from the Lost Property Office, and they found him holding forth to a congregation of lost articles. Having been found, it appeared, on the platform without a label, he had been taken there for safe custody. His label was gone, doubtless, and, as a portion of it was found sticking to his bill, the presumptive conclusion was that he had eaten it, paste and all, under the impression that it was edible, and placed there for his consumption.

They were just bearing the virtuous creature off in triumph, when a savage 'w-whoop!' and a shriek of 'Gone away!' attracted their attention to an excited mob of porters and passengers, headed by the volatile young officer they had already noticed, in hot pursuit of some animal. What was it? Heavens, a guinea-pig! With bitter thoughts of what the twins' feelings would have been, Veri-

sopht and his father dashed down the platform to the rescue. Mr. Boomershine soon led the van, and so hotly pressed the guinea-pig that, in its indiscriminating terror, it took refuge in the voluminous folds of an old lady's dress, whither Mr. Boomershine, in the ardour of the chase, followed it. The old lady could only ejaculate, 'Oh! Oh!! Oh!!!' each time in a louder key; but if there was a sameness in her remarks, she had a way of emphasizing them with her umbrella which, though it at first seemed to make more impression on Mr. Boomershine's hat than his mind, eventually recalled that gentleman to a true sense of the proceeding. In vain did he then doff his battered hat, and hold out the recaptured guinea-pig as a living apology. The old lady was not to be appeased, but stood defiantly smoothing her ruffled plumes, and muttering, 'Guinea-pig or no guinea-pig, she wasn't going to be insulted in public by the likes of him.' The more abject Mr. Boomershine became in his apologies, the higher position of outraged modesty the old lady took up, until at last all further colloquy was cut short by the guard of the train shouting out, 'Now then, take your seats, please!'

The engine screamed angrily; so did the old lady, that Mr. Boomershine would hear more from the Secretary of the Society for the Protection of Women; and the porters shouted, 'Look sharp, sir!' Verisopht was bundled into a compartment, and the guinea-pigs, with Mentor, into the guard's van. It was a moment of intense excitement.

'Good-bye! Bless you, my boy, bless you!' said Mr. Boomershine.

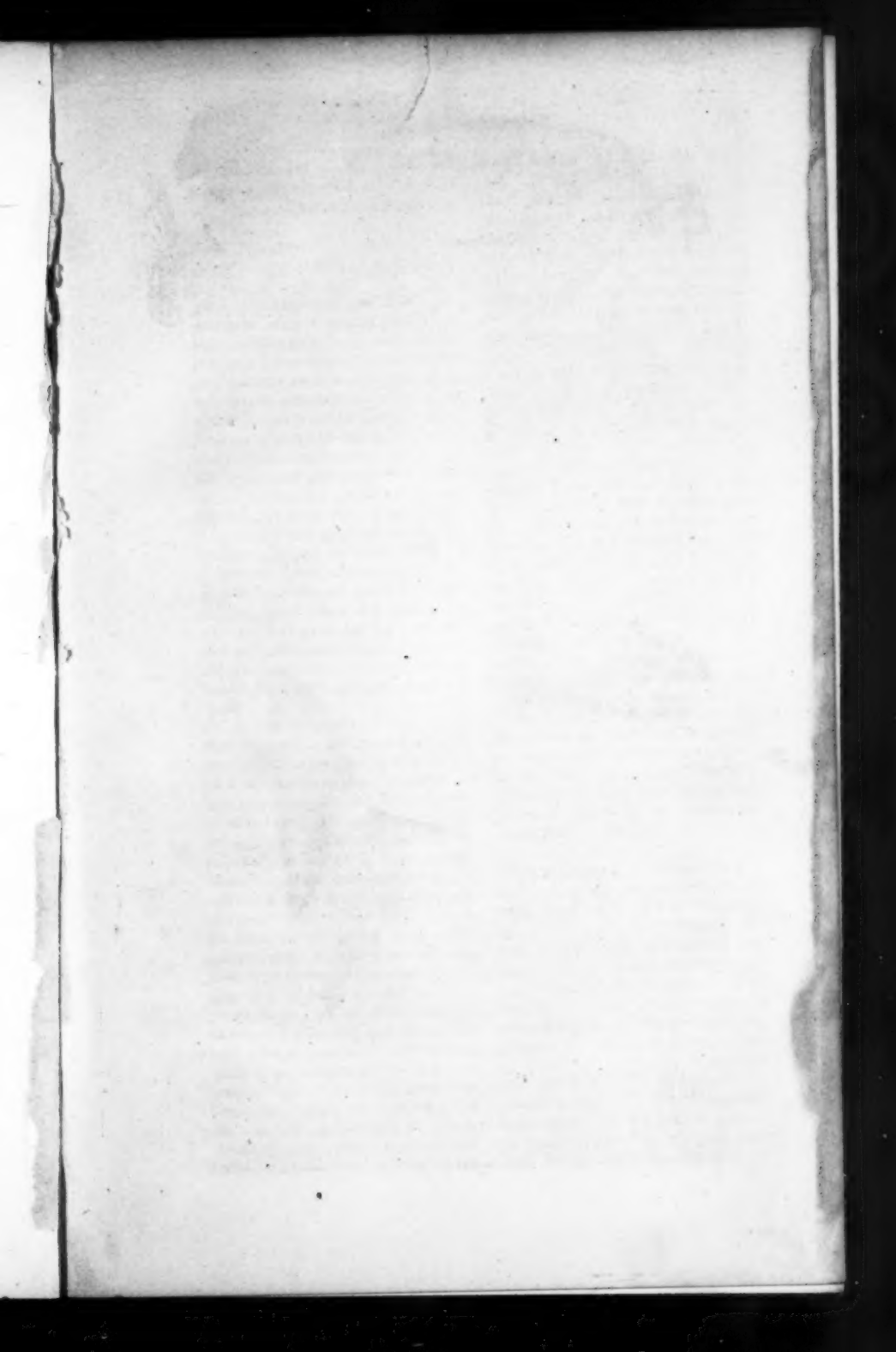
And so they parted—father and son; the son to be whirled off in a state of agonising perplexity;

the father to be led away, perchance to durance vile, on a charge of unprovoked assault.

CHAPTER VI.

It would be heartless to keep the reader in that state of suspense concerning Mr. Boomershine's fate which the conclusion of the last chapter has doubtless thrown him into. So, although our course lies properly with the anguish-stricken *son en route* for Aldershot, we will linger for one moment on the platform, to present the father in the act of following his country's example, and settling the difficulty by paying his way out of it.

Unfortunately for Verisopht's peace of mind, he had been unable to witness this satisfactory *dénouement*, and for many miles of his journey he sat haunted by the spectacle of his father, as he had last beheld him, confronted by the enraged female. It was some time before his perturbed feelings calmed down sufficiently to admit of his looking about him. He had been awakened out of his painful reverie by a violent fit of coughing, and he found that the compartment was full of smoke. He could hear a great deal of laughing and talking going on, but could see little of the speakers, who were enveloped in clouds of their own manufacture. He could count, however, that there were five of them, by the glowing ends of their cigars, which looked like gas-lamps in a London fog. At last, as his eyes became used to the atmosphere, he made out the volatile young gentleman, who had headed the chase after the guinea-pig, sitting opposite to him. This young man seemed to enjoy no small share of popularity; and his remarks, which were nearly incessant, were received with great





Drawn by R. Caldecott.]

'HE WOULD BE A SOLDIER!'
'Mr. Boomerhines held out the recaptured guinea-pig as a living apology.'

laughter and applause. He was evidently recounting some anecdote, but as the actors and the expressions used were unknown to Verisopht, he could merely take his cue when to laugh from the others, and this he did, in remembrance of his father's advice to adapt himself to different phases of society.

'I was doing galloper, you know, to old Squaretoes,' said the young man, 'and so I saw the whole thing. Well, the bugle sounded "Commanding officers to the front," and it was a caution to snakes to see the old Flapper come lolloping along on that rat-tailed gee of his, arms and legs all over the shop. "Why didn't you bring that regiment of yours up by double column of companies?" roared old Squaretoes. "Because you told me not to," said the Flapper. "I told you not to! Did I tell him not to do so?" said Squaretoes, turning to Cocky Turnbull. "Yeth you did, thir," said Cocky—you know Cocky's way? By Jove! you should have heard old Squaretoes let fly. He nearly blew Cocky clean out of his saddle, eye-glass and all. It was a screaming good sell, though, wasn't it?'

This was received with shouts of laughter from every one except Verisopht, who was as much in the dark as if the narrator had been a Choctaw Indian conversing in his native tongue. Cocky! Flapper! gee! all over the shop! galloper! Would the proud day ever arrive when *he* should be able to converse in this strain? Would *he* ever be able to raise such shouts of laughter by a story of a flapper, a cocky, and a gee?

In such ambitious forecasts, Verisopht was too wrapt to join in the general merriment; but the narrator, mistaking his coughs and his streaming eyes—the result of the smoke—for unfeigned parox-

ysms of mirth, was pleased to offer him a cigar.

'No, I thank you,' said Verisopht, very much flattered by the attention, on the part of so great a personage. 'I have never smoked, and, indeed, I should scarcely like to venture, for I have been told by my father that the first attempts are invariably attended with most unpleasant sensations.'

This was Verisopht's opening speech, and, though deeply blushing the while, he delivered it with great pains, after the manner of Masters Sandford and Merton, whom he had always made his conversational models when on his best behaviour.

On this there were a great many winks, and whispers of 'What a cure!' 'Where was he riz, I wonder?' &c.

'Are you going to Aldershot?' asked the gentleman who had offered the cigar.

'Yes; I am going to join my regiment, in accordance with the instructions contained in——'

'Oh yes, exactly. What regiment?'

'The 119th.'

At this there were general cries of 'Hulloa, Wilder, your fellows will learn a thing or two now!' 'I say, Hooky, you'll be getting so precious sharp, you'll be cutting all your old friends,' &c.

'The devil you are,' said the gentlemen addressed as 'Hooky' and 'Wilder.' 'Why that's *my* regiment.'

'Is it?' said Verisopht; 'well, I am pleased to hear that. I am so glad to have met with one of my brother-officers. Is Aldershot a nice place?'

'Oh, delightful,' replied Wilder. 'One of the most charming spots. Did you ever hear it called the Garden of England?'

'No, I don't know that I ever did,' replied Verisopht.

'Well, neither have I; but that title would, without doubt, be conferred on it, were the beauties of the Long Valley more generally known.'

'And what is the Long Valley?'

'Oh, it's where we go and pick primroses and lilies of the valley on Sunday afternoons.'

'That's when they're in season, of course?' said Verisopht proudly, conscious of having been rather sharp.

'Of course; but when they're not, we botanise. Vegetation in that fertile spot is almost tropical in its growth, and offers a tempting field to the botanist.'

Here there was much tittering, and a murmur ran through the compartment that 'Hooky Wilder was in form to-night.'

'Well now,' said Verisopht enthusiastically, 'I'd give a golden guinea if my aunt could hear all that. You won't be angry at what I'm going to say now?' he asked, looking round.

'No, no, not in the least,' chorused every one.

'Well—well, she says—— No, but really, I hardly——'

'Fire away!' 'Go ahead!' proceeded from different occupants of the compartment.

'Well, she thinks officers dreadfully wild, and says they think nothing of getting—— No, but really now, you know, are you sure you won't be offended?'

On this Wilder seized him by the hand, and pressed him to unburthen his bosom.

'Well, that you'd think nothing of getting just a little—— No, but really, I hardly like——'

'Cut away!' said every one.

'Well, just a little—tipsy.'

The word was hardly out of Verisopht's mouth before he bitterly repented his outspoken candour. There was a general burst of indignation. Some put their

handkerchiefs up to their faces; some hid their burning countenances behind their newspapers; and one gentleman, who had been very drowsy all the time, on being now roused up to have the foul aspersions explained to him, said he had never been 'sho 'shulted in all life.' Poor Wilder was very much affected. He buried his face in his handkerchief, and his whole frame shook with the intensity of his emotion.

'Oh don't, please don't! Really I didn't mean—I didn't think——' stammered poor Verisopht.

'Well, promise us one thing,' said Wilder, seizing his hand: 'promise us, my young Christian friend—if you'll allow me to call you so——'

Verisopht could only reply by a pressure of the hand.

'Promise us that you will write to your aunt, and tell her how wickedly, how grossly, she has been deceived.'

'I will,' said Verisopht: 'I promise you all I will.'

'Thank you. It will take such a dreadful load off all our minds. And now let us dismiss this painful subject. We are now close to Woking station. I vote we go odd man out for a B. and S. all round.'

The proposal was carried *nem. con.*, and Verisopht was initiated into the mysteries of 'odd man out,' and a 'B. and S.' before he was many minutes older. He was a little surprised to find that 'B. and S.' was a beverage, of which one of the ingredients was an ardent spirit; and Wilder, reading this surprise in his expressive countenance, kindly explained the matter.

'You see, it having been brought to the notice of the Commander-in-Chief that the night air about Woking is injurious, owing probably to the vicinity of the cemetery, he has issued an order that

all officers on passing through the station are to fortify themselves against the malaria. It is a great nuisance. But obedience is the first duty of a soldier, and, no matter what violence we do to our feelings, the order must be obeyed.'

Verisopt was much obliged to Wilder for the kind explanation; and, fired by the noble example of cheerful obedience set him by his companions, he finished the liquid to the very last drops; though, as he explained in a subsequent letter to his parents, it was the most nauseous draught he had ever tasted, and reminded him forcibly of coal-tar and soapsuds, besides imparting a balloon-like sensation to the drinker.

Before leaving Woking Verisopt was noticed to linger behind and to engage in a transaction of a hurried and mysterious nature with the attendant damsel at the bar. Whatever it was, there was only just time to complete it and take his seat before the train moved off.

'Ah, you sly dog!' said Wilder. 'We saw you—after the petticoats, eh!'

And here Wilder poked Verisopt in the ribs, and made that peculiar noise which generally accompanies the action, and which is supposed to take up the sly insinuation at that point where words fail.

As Wilder's example was followed by all those who were near enough, and as Verisopt was both ticklish and sly, his repudiation of the soft impeachment was rather confused and incoherent.

'No indeed!—Now really!—Oh, I say!—Well I'm sure!—Oh, now you've spoilt them all!

'Spoilt what?' asked Wilder.

'Why,' replied Verisopt, holding something out of sight and looking round him pleasantly, 'I thought it would be a capital

treat, and a little return, you know, for all your kind explanations.'

As he spoke he produced from behind him a paper bag containing twelve jam puffs, and with a pleasant consciousness of the fast nature of the proceeding, commenced by handing Wilder one.

'Well, you know,' said Wilder, dubiously poisoning the tart on his forefinger, 'we should be delighted; but, unfortunately, we are forbidden by the rules of the service to eat such things on pain of—well not exactly death,' said 'Hooky,' placing his hands tenderly on his waistcoat—'it comes under the head of "conduct unbecoming the character of an officer and a gentleman."'

'You don't say so!' said Verisopt, with a blank expression of dismay, and the Simon blood curdled in his veins with horror.

'Yes, we take an oath on joining to eschew all such vanities as jam puffs, toffee, and hardbake. However, I know of nothing in the Queen's Regulations forbidding their external application. So here goes.'

Suiting the action to the words, Wilder, amidst a shout of laughter, took such an unerring aim at the gentleman in the corner, who had been 'sho 'shulted' by Aunt Millicent's opinion, and was now fast asleep again, that the jam puff split into numerous fragments on that feature immediately above the one where jam puffs usually complete their destiny.

'How curshed flesh thicke!' was all the remark the gentleman made, as he brushed away a few imaginary blue-bottles. Then hearing a good deal of laughter going on, he appeared to think that something convivial and cheery was expected from him, and at once broke out into a song suggested by the two predominant

ideas on his mind at the moment—conviviality and flies:—

“*Passh bo’l whenumdry,
Brush ’way blue-chailed fly.*”

On a second application, however, he woke up to a foggy sense of affairs, and, seizing the fragments around him, returned the fire with such wildness that Verisopht’s horrified countenance came in for a decoration of preserved fruit instead of Wilder’s.

‘What’s in an aim?’ said Hooky, as he took another shot which showed that at all events there was a tolerable amount of accuracy in *his*, for again the missile hit its mark full and fair.

This was the signal for a general action. Verisopht’s bag was seized, and the pastry flew about in clouds, while the raspberry-jam adhering to the countenances and clothes of the combatants lent quite a sanguinary aspect to the affair.

At this strange scene Verisopht looked on aghast, thinking that all this was perhaps rather more unbecoming the characters of officers and gentlemen than if they had quietly eaten the tarts. But he kept his thoughts to himself, which, considering the reckless spirit which now possessed his companions, was the best thing he could have done.

The engagement raged with considerable fury until all the ammunition was expended, and then after the storm came calm reflection. The incoherent gentleman in the corner said it was ‘all rot,’ and resumed his slumbers; another gentleman who had enjoyed it all very much while it lasted now peevishly remarked, as he scraped the remains of a jam tart off his white waistcoat, that it was ‘all denced fine, you know, but if ever you were in Hooky Wilder’s company you were certain to find yourself let in for some infernal

piece of madness;’ and, finally, they all, with some returning sense of propriety, gathered up the tell-tale débris into Verisopht’s hat-box.

After this our hero, slightly under the influence of the unaccustomed potation, became very talkative, and underwent the process of being drawn out, until his hearers knew all about Aunt Millicent and Mentor, the twins’ guineapigs, his sisters’ accomplishments, and Peter’s proficiency in Latin. The confidences best received were those relating to Aunt Millicent and his sisters; and altogether the time passed pleasantly enough until the train drawing up amidst monotonous cries of ‘Shot! Shot!’ apprised them all that they had arrived at the station for that military hotbed, the Camp of Aldershot.

CHAPTER VII.

THERE were several soldiers standing about on the platform, and Verisopht, noticing that each wore a band round his arm with the letters M.P. on it, asked Wilder what it meant.

‘It is a badge of infamy,’ was the reply. ‘They are men who have got drunk four times within a year, and in such detestation is this crime held by the British soldier, that when one of them commits himself to this extent he is looked upon as something to be wondered at, and is labelled, as you perceive, “Miraculous Phenomenon.” Just see how they gather round that man as if welcoming him into the degraded brotherhood,’ and as Wilder spoke, the ‘Miraculous Phenomenons’ swooped down upon a soldier in a very advanced stage of intoxication, who had just tumbled out of a third class carriage, and bore him away, their burden all the

time applying to a public body he called the 'mil'ry pleesh' certain expressions which Verisopht, until Wilder enlightened him, had not the slightest idea were terms of endearment. Indeed, from the tones in which they were couched, he should have supposed they had been quite the reverse. What a lesson was here afforded him not to judge by first appearances; and being an affectionate lad, he committed a few of the endearing epithets to memory, with the intention of applying them to his father when next they met. He also took a mental note of the whole scene as an interesting item in his first letter to Aunt Millicent, and congratulated himself upon having found a cicerone like Wilder, who seemed to know everything, and never to be at a loss for an explanation.

The members of the party, belonging to different regiments, now separated and went their several ways, but not before they had bid Verisopht an affectionate farewell, and requested that they might be remembered in the kindest terms to his aunt when he next wrote to her.

'Now,' said Verisopht to Wilder, 'I call that being really pleasant and friendly. I do wish my aunt could only have heard them. I am sure she would have been gratified beyond measure. Do you know she says——'

'Never mind your aunt for the present,' said Wilder, who was a man of action, and had taken Verisopht under his wing—a wing, be it remarked, apparently addicted to flights of fancy. 'Let's get your traps together, and get away up to barracks. It will be too late to arrange anything to-night, and I'll give you a shake-down in my quarters. You don't mind roughing it, I suppose?'

Verisopht explained that he

positively thirsted for hardships, and as he did so, he almost felt that nothing short of a bullet in the brain would slake his thirst for glory. At all events, it would have stopped his asking for more.

"He jests at scars that never felt a wound," said Wilder. 'Wait a bit, until you have had a little taste of it; or if you find it impossible to restrain your ardour, you can commence at once by sitting down all to-night in my tub, with the hose of the barrack engine directed down your back, and worked by a fatigue party. It will give you a capital idea of the Autumn Manœuvres at Dartmoor, and you'll be doing quite as much good to yourself and your country.'

The remembrance of his mother's parting injunctions on the subject of guarding against colds and coughs restrained Verisopht from closing with this kind offer, and he confusedly murmured his intention of waiting until hardships came in his way, and then taking them coolly.

'That's right: now come along,' and Wilder, for whom the porters bustled about with smiling alacrity as if he were a well-known character, soon had everything ready for a start.

The luggage was piled up on the roof of the fly, and surmounting the whole was Mentor, while the guinea-pigs, as befitted their inferior attainments, occupied a less exalted position underneath the cage of that accomplished animal. The virtuous bird was evidently far from well. He was probably suffering from label on the chest; but whether it was the paper, the paste, or the print that had disagreed with him, it is impossible to say. Finding himself, however, in this commanding position, and apparently thinking that something was expected from

him, he summoned up enough energy to croak out in sepulchral tones, 'Evil communications corrupt good manners,' a statement much relished by the bystanders.

'M Lines, North Camp,' shouted Wilder to the driver of the fly, and the vehicle moved off at a majestic rate amidst the applause of a knot of porters, at whom Mentor had let off a parting precept. Thus fired to the performance of still nobler deeds, the virtuous creature then addressed himself, through the bottom of his cage, to the regeneration of the guinea-pigs.

As they drove on, Verisopht looked eagerly out of the windows for those military sights which he expected would burst upon his gaze at every moment; but he was disappointed to find that the town of Aldershot, as well as he could see by the gaslight, had nothing distinctively military about it, with the exception of a red-coat here and there, and was very much like any other English town. When they emerged from the streets, however, his martial soul was gladdened by the sight of immense blocks of brick buildings, gleaming with lights, and teeming with military life. There were bugles and trumpets sounding, fifes and drums playing tattoo at one end of a square, a regimental band playing outside the officers' messes at the other, non-commissioned officers calling over the rolls at the top of their voices, and men shouting back in response. Altogether, Verisopht thought it one of the most inspiring scenes he had ever witnessed. These were the permanent barracks, as Wilder informed him, and, after leaving them, they passed through an interminable succession of rows of low, black, wooden huts; and, here again, in different parts, there were more bugles, and bands, and

calling over the rolls. At last, after a great deal of shouting from Wilder, the fly drew up at one of the huts, which Wilder informed Verisopht was 'his diggings.'

With the assistance of Wilder's servant, who was on the look-out, the luggage was soon transferred to one of the small rooms and the passage of the establishment; after which, Wilder and Verisopht betook themselves to the anteroom of the mess.

Verisopht was rather nervous and shy as he approached the red-curtained hut, and he pictured to himself a gay host of red-coated gentlemen jumping up to welcome their newly-joined brother in arms, perhaps with some peculiar ceremony, perhaps with outspoken *bonhomie*, certainly with courtesy.

As he entered his eyes wandered round the room for what he had expected, and he found that his imagination had carried him rather wide of the mark. There was not a soul to be seen at first, and it was only when a deep snore, proceeding from the depths of an arm-chair, caused him to look in the direction whence it came, that he saw two legs, with a red stripe down each, protruding from a newspaper; from which he gathered that the owner of the military legs had fallen asleep while reading the news.

Hooky Wilder held up his finger in mute appeal to Verisopht to be silent, and noiselessly stepped across the room on tip-toe.

'How considerate,' thought Verisopht. 'He is doubtless anxious not to disturb the poor fellow, worn out with his arduous duties.'

The considerate Wilder's movements now became very mysterious. He lighted a spill and carefully balanced it on the instep of the sleeper's patent-leather boot, at the same time explaining in a

whisper to Verisopht that the heat would cause the leather to draw, and afford the sleeper the most delicious sensations of having a nice comfortable thumbcrew applied to his foot; and was, in short, one of the most pleasant methods of awakening any one. 'In fact,' concluded Wilder, 'it is a pleasant little *jeu d'esprit*, entitled "The Sleeper Awakened."

On this Verisopht became so interested in the process, with a view to hereafter practising it on his father, that he stooped low to watch the progress of the flame, and became so wrapped in his observations as not to notice that Wilder had slipped behind the sleeper's chair.

In the space of about five seconds there was a violent upheaval of the newspaper, and the young seeker after practical knowledge, with a yell of mingled pain and wrath ringing in his ears, found himself taking an unexpected part in the one-act drama entitled 'The Sleeper Awakened.' It was not a pleasant nor a dignified part by any means, and merely consisted in being banged violently on the head with Hart's 'Annual Army List,' the nearest weapon that came to the awakened sleeper's hand. That highly respectable mixture, the commingled blood of the Simples, the Verisophts, the Raws, and the Boomershines boiled.

'Do that again!' said Verisopht.

His request was immediately complied with, and this time the action was accompanied by the angry queries, 'Who the devil are you, sir? What the devil do you mean by—oh, you scoundrel, Hooky! it's you, is it?' And the speaker having been apprised of Wilder's presence by a stifled burst of laughter behind the chair, here spoke the soft word which

turned away Verisopht's wrath just before it took the dangerous form of retaliation.

'I beg you ten thousand pardons,' he said; 'but you must admit that appearances were greatly against you, and I really thought that, in a total stranger, such a liberty amounted to downright impertinence.'

Verisopht at once saw that there was reason in the other's words, and readily shook the hand held out to him.

'He is the new wart,' said Wilder, by way of introduction.

'Oh, indeed!' said the young officer, and he again shook hands with Verisopht, this time in his capacity as the 'new wart.'

How differently to the ideal the real was gradually turning out. There was no martial welcome to the young aspirant to military renown; no peculiar ceremony of initiation; but here he was, first banged on the head with a book, and then introduced as a 'wart.'

'I don't wish to hurt your feelings, Boomershine,' said Wilder, 'but the fact is, "wart" is a generic term for all sub-lieutenants. You see—and here again, pray excuse me—their position is lowly, and as the Duke of Wellington, or the Archbishop of Canterbury, or the beadle of Burlington Arcade, or some other high personage, remarked, they are mere excrescences on the face of society, and, as brevity is the soul of wit, the whole definition is summed up in the unpretending title of "wart."'

'Oh, indeed,' said Verisopht, and he took a seat, and a mental note that he would not enter into this subject in his next letter home.

'Where are all the fellows to-night, Buffer?' asked Wilder.

'Oh, the regiment is dining with the Rifles,' was the reply, 'and there were only three of us at mess. Old Calipash has gone off

awfully huffed because I wouldn't listen to his West Indian yarns; Slowcock has gone to his room to read for the Staff College; and I was on duty, worse luck to it.'

'Who's in orders for duty to-morrow?' asked Wilder.

'You are,' replied the other, with a chuckle.

'How's that? Where's Smiler?' indignantly asked Hooky. 'He's next on the roster.'

'Smiler got a telegram this morning saying his aunt's awfully bad, and he's off to the North.'

'Come, I say,' said Wilder, in an injured tone of voice, 'that's rather too much of a good thing. That's coming it rather too strong, upon my soul it is. That blessed old aunt of Smiler's is worth two months' leave in the year to him, and she always gets these sudden attacks just before his turn of duty. She's a gross imposition, and if he doesn't kill or cure her this journey I'll denounce her to the chief as the most gigantic fraud of the day. Anything been going on while I've been away?'

'Oh no, only the usual grind—field-day, guard, court-martial; court-martial, guard, field-day. What sort of a time have you been having up in town?'

On this Wilder entered upon a very detailed and spirited account of his doings, and became so enigmatical that Verisopht, after trying for a long time to look as if he understood the many jokes with which the narrative was interspersed, at last sank into a slumber.

He must have dozed for about an hour, when Wilder woke him up.

'Come along, Boomerashine, you're tired; so am I; we'll turn in. I haven't had more than about five hours altogether be-

tween the sheets the whole three days I've been away, and, confound that aunt of Smiler's! I shall have to get up at six o'clock to-morrow. Buffer has gone to turn out the regimental guard.'

Piloted by Wilder along the row of huts, which were bewilderingly alike, Verisopht soon found himself in the narrow, dark little passage which pierced the centre of Wilder's row.

'Here, take hold of the tail of my coat until I strike a light,' said Wilder, as Verisopht attempted to force his way through one or two partitions, and perversely tried to walk up the one step that went down, and to walk down the one step that went up.

The kind offer was accepted in time to avert any serious catastrophe, and in a few moments a light shed its cheery rays on the scene.

Verisopht now found himself in an apartment about ten feet square, and, occupying a considerable portion of it, was the bed which Wilder's servant had put up for his reception.

'I hope you'll sleep comfortably,' said Wilder; 'it's only a camp bed I had in the last autumn manoeuvres; but it's a capital contrivance, and the best of it is it shuts up and goes into such a small space.'

Verisopht wished his kind host good-night; and not long after retiring to rest became practically acquainted with the advantages of a bed which 'shuts up and goes into a small space.'

As he did not like to disturb Wilder, and was utterly ignorant of the mechanism of the contrivance, he passed his first night as one of his country's defenders, rather more like a hedgehog than a soldier.

(To be continued.)

PAIRING.

I.

THE April airs are dewy sweet
 Beneath the woodland shade,
 And youthful lovers dream to meet
 In glen, in grassy glade,
 And where the bride laburnum veils her face in golden braid.
 The larks of last year long for time
 To shake the crystal air ;
 The old larks for the hour to climb
 That blue and giddy stair,
 That each may woo his brooding mate, and tell her she is fair.

II.

Yet in the smoky city dwell
 Grey-beards who guide the state ;
 Of near and distant plots they tell
 In weary long debate,
 And keep the Opposition up unconscionably late.
 But when the sun is warm and bright,
 And they are sick of care,
 Although their hair is snowy white,
 Their daughters' daughter fair,
 Each prays the Whip to find for him an eligible pair !

III.

And, thus, from youth to life's decline,
 We find that bird and man
 Adopt the very self-same line,
 And pair whene'er they can ;
 But still they differ in the aim, though following the plan.
 In youth man asks a dearest friend
 To live with him for aye ;
 Wise counsels on the years attend,
 And often ere decay,
 Man holds as kindest some good friend who'll let him run away !

L. ARDEE.

THE OLD DESSAUER;

OR, THE STORY OF A PLAY.

BY H. SCHÜTZ WILSON, AUTHOR OF 'STUDIES AND ROMANCES.'

ART, through painting or through literature, determines for our fancy the external or physical appearance both of the 'mighty dead' of history and of the great characters of fiction. Certain figures and characters, incarnated or idealised for the imagination by painting or by acting, are presented and rendered permanent to the mind's eye solely in the autumn of their lives or the winter of their age. Art, as a rule, paints the portraits of great men after they have attained to eminence; and the summit of the high, steep hill of fame is rarely gained until men have reached at least unto the *mezzo del cammin di nostra vita*. Painting overlooks the unknown youth and records the famous man. Literature exercises an arbitrary, if natural selection, touching the stage of life in which it may be pleased to depict an ideal figure. There is something sad in seeing through portraiture your great men only in the fulness of their years. All these men had a youth, though the art which, 'mute and motionless, steals but a glance from time,' arrests merely the moment in which it paints. There was a time in which to these great, old men fame would have been more prized and precious than now—though then it came not. Enjoyment and possession do not always not occur together. Reputation, recognition, come often in the deadened, saddened maturity of men's lives, when almost all things have lost their glory and their joy; and the period in which fame elates no longer is the one

which artists paint. The unrecorded youth of such men was full of life, of aspiration, of struggle, and of passion.

Let us glance at one or two instances of our theory. King Lear is never present to our imagination except as an old man. We see, whenever we think of him, the 'white discrowned head,' which Campbell sang, set off against a background of 'hell-black night.' We never think of a youth in connection with the image of the sorrow-strained old king of Britain. Think, again, of Cromwell, and you have before you the face and figure of a man who has attained to more than the middle of man's age. Johnson is always present to the idea as an old man. Goethe is rendered visible to us mainly by portraits painted in the serene glory of his majestic age. Some characters of song, like Nestor, exist only in the attributes of mellow age and ripened wisdom. Some men, half in rough affection, half in genial reverence and respect, acquire, as a sort of endearing title, the epithet of 'old.' One of these latter is the well-known 'Old Dessauer,' whose place in history is not inaptly symbolised by his prominent position in Rauch's monument to the great Frederick, and to his great captains. The Prince would probably have occupied a greater space in men's estimation if Schiller's projected epic on the subject of Frederick the Great had been completed.

Leopold, Prince of Anhalt-Dessau, rises before us, when we would summon up his image in

our thought, as a rugged old soldier 'whose very face is the colour of gunpowder.' His regimentals, of the time of the Seven Years' War, his great jack-boots, his wig and pigtail, his cocked hat—nay, even his war-furrowed, weather-beaten, grim, old, noble face—are all familiar to us, and rise up together, forming the totality of the apparition which we evoke. He was a born soldier. Men are born soldiers, as they are born poets, painters, or musicians. Providence gets its different work in the world done by bestowing different gifts on men. Leopold invented, in the art military, marching in step, and replaced the old wooden ramrods by iron ones. He even, though of a 'very unvocal nature,' succeeded in composing a certain Dessau March, to which his own Anhalt regiment, and, afterwards, many others in that great Prussian army, could and did joyfully and proudly march, whether on parade or on the route to battle. The Prince did not know a note of music, but he succeeded in conveying the melody which he invented to an Italian *maestro*, who put it into musical form and shape. After a stormy soldier life of battles, sieges, toils, hardships, dangers, he finally died a soldier's death in battle, when, amid the thunder of cannon, 'all the war was rolled in smoke.' 'He was,' says Carlyle, 'a man of vast dumb faculty; dumb, but fertile, deep; no end of ingenuities in the rough head of him. . . . Perhaps the biggest mass of inarticulate human vitality, certainly one of the biggest, then going about in the world. A man of dreadful impetuosity withal.' He had the gift, as the habit, of command; the nervous vitalism of his supreme will could, and did, subdue and lead the wills of other men.

But this impetuous, resolute, rough old Dessauer had actually a youth; was once really young. This youth, which was very much the father of his manhood, contained a real and noble romance of true and lasting love—a romance which may, as it seems to me, have some interest for readers of to-day.

Let us go back, in fancy, to the years 1694–1698. We are in Dessau, the capital, and *Residenz*, of the little principality of Anhalt-Dessau, which is 'about the size of Huntingdonshire, but with woods instead of bogs,' and lies some fourscore miles south-west of Berlin. The streets of little Dessau are full of quaint, old-world German houses, and human life lived itself there in quiet, nay, even dull fashion, at the end of the seventeenth century. Two buildings in Dessau will possess a quite special interest for us. One is the princely palace; the other, situated very close to the palace, is the apothecary's shop of one Gottlieb Föhse. This apothecary was a widower, and had a daughter, 'one fair daughter, and no more, which he loved passing well.' Her name was Anna-Lise. She dwelt with her father, while Leopold, then eighteen, lived in the palace close by. A charming young girl, and an impetuous young prince living in close proximity in a little *Residenz*—here we have the groundwork for a romance which may take either a French or a German turn; may either issue in light love and depravity, or in noble, steadfast love, and, possibly, even in marriage. We shall see. Another element of romance is not wanting—there is a rival in the case: a certain 'medical graduate,' supposed to be a cousin, who, attracted by Anna-Lise's bright eyes, and rather encou-

raged by old Föhse as a very suitable suitor, somewhat persecuted Anna with his attentions. The medical graduate, however, gradually found out that it was a dangerous thing to cross the fiery Leopold in his love; and discovered, rather too late for his comfort, that a small-sword, dexterously if impetuously urged, will penetrate a rival body and produce the most serious annoyance. Varnhagen von Ense relates (though other historians are silent on the subject) that Leopold one day, finding the medical graduate engaged in making love to Anna, called upon him to draw, and, after a brief passage of fencing, ran his imprudent rival through. A dangerous man, Leopold, with his sword, when once thoroughly aroused to flaming anger; as dangerous, perhaps, as Alessandro Farnese in his stormful youth. Leopold's mother, Henrietta of Orange, was sister to Louisa, first wife of the great Elector. His father was dead at the time at which our story opens; and the widowed princess was regent, and guardian of the young hope of Anhalt-Dessau. She was aunt to our William III. She had a touch of Netherlands geniality, but was full of the importance of a woman governing a principality, and endeavouring to rule a son who had very original ideas and a singularly strong will of his own. She was surrounded by the Court circle usual in the small German sovereignties of those days, and had a most exalted idea, of the old feudal sort, of the importance of the Anhalt-Dessau reigning family, and of her power of controlling everything and everybody. She had no very clear idea of the force of character, or of the distinguished talents of her unruly, iron-willed son.

The Anhalt-Dessau family held

closely to Prussia. Leopold's father had done so; Leopold himself did so, in a very memorable way; and his sons followed after him. The Dessau contingent was fused into the Prussian army, and the Anhalt regiment became very famous among the troops of Frederick the Great, who, born 1712, was some forty-five years younger than his great general and field-marshal, Prince Leopold. Although always busily fighting, wherever fighting for what he considered to be right was to be done, the Prince did not neglect his own little principality of Anhalt-Dessau, and, indeed, governed it prudently and successfully all his life long. He made the Prussian infantry the model soldiers of the time, and commanded them first at Blenheim, holding his ground in the right wing after the Austrian cavalry had fled, until Marlborough and his victorious left wing relieved the Dessauer and saved the day. Leopold had seen much of war before the Seven Years' War began, and had fought at Hochstädt, at the Bridge of Cassano, in the Lines of Turin, at Blenheim, and at Malplaquet. He commenced his career under Friedrich III., the twelfth Elector, who, as Frederick I., became the first King of Prussia, and finished it under Frederick I.'s grandson, the great Frederick—Frederick II. of Prussia.

Let us now turn our fancies to the time when the old Dessauer was not yet old; let us look at the youthful love time which preceded the long years of warring of the soldier man. To aid us in our object, I shall refer to the admirable play, by Mr. Hermann Hersch, which he calls 'Die Anna-Lise.'

Anna is about seventeen, extremely pretty, much pestered by one lover and much pleased by

another. In addition to beauty and to vivacity, she is a girl of a glorious nature.

The young Prince and the young girl have grown up together as playmates, and now the passion time of life is budding in which such play may well turn to earnest. The father, timid and cautious, afraid of offending the 'Herrschaft,' and dreading for his daughter a continuance of the old intimacy with Leopold, is anxious that Anna should listen to her medical adviser and admirer. Anna, though generally dutiful, is yet quite unable to obey in this particular; and nothing, or nobody, can deter the Prince from doing what he wills to do. Mr. Hersch makes no use of the incident, but we may safely assume that the duel which ended so seriously for our medical friend occurred about this time.

In the play, Georg, the doctor, bears about the same relation to Leopold and to Anna that Brackenburg, in 'Egmont,' bears to Egmont and to Clärchen; although the relations of Leopold and Anna in nowise resemble those of the splendid Count towards Goethe's immortal heroine. Old Föhse warns Anna against permitting the continual, almost daily, visits of the Prince; points out to her that good can never come of such an intimacy between an heir to a throne and a burgher maiden; cautions her against loss of reputation, and urges her no longer to address the Prince as 'Du,' or to call him 'Leopold.' He advises her to address her lover as 'Durchlaucht,' or Transparency, and begs her to insist upon a total discontinuance of all intercourse or of any future visits.

Anna's understanding, if not her heart, induces her to obey her father, and she endeavours to persuade Leopold to renounce her and to

leave her for ever. All in vain. The impetuous lover laughs at the title of 'Durchlaucht'; utterly refuses to give her up, declares an honourable and determined passion; and opposes his fiery, steadfast will to the opposition of his mother, her father, and the whole world.

Leopold was not a lover likely to be much deterred by any attempts to thwart his love.

The Regent, horrified at the thought of a *mésalliance* for the heir of Anhalt-Dessau, after an entirely vain effort to coerce her son, takes counsel with her Hofmarschall, von Salberg, and with the Marquis de Chalisac, the French governor and tutor of the Prince. Föhse, Anna's father, is quite with the Princess; who, by the way, always addresses the apothecary as 'Er,' the style in which a German princess of those days spoke to a burgher. The Regent was too well aware of the fiery force latent in her son to adopt violent measures. She feared that he would, if any serious attempt were made to part them, instantly marry Anna-Lise; and she, no doubt, was right. The 'Eisenkopf,' the iron-head, as Leopold was called, was a turbulent and mutinous lad whom no one could control. The Princess remembered that it was only when, as a boy, he was allowed to play with Anna-Lise, she could at all manage the young rebel. With his child love the terrible Leopold was docile and gentle as a lamb. Anna-Lise, best and dearest of girls, supplied the softness and tenderness and poetic element needed to balance the Prince's character of fire and of iron. The Regent also recollected how she herself, and her sister, the first wife of the great Elector, had often, in later years, laughed together over their

first idle love-fancies; and she decided upon proceeding by gentle measures, trusting to time and—to absence. It was resolved to let the Prince travel for a year or two, with his tutor, De Chalisac. In his absence much might be done. The girl, with suitable dotation, might be happily married to one in her own station. Leopold would forget her. He once away, the girl would be malleable in their hands. This Princess had confidence in her own diplomacy. It was much that Leopold should start unmarried.

Certainly the Regent did not really understand her son.

He consented readily to go. He desired ardently to go to Berlin in order to join the Brandenburg army, and to obtain from the Elector his father's Anhalt regiment. To his mother's joy he was eager to set out at once. Before he went, however, Leopold declared, in the most positive manner, his fixed determination to marry Anna-Lise so soon as he should return. He knew, he said, that directly he should be gone there would be intrigues, and all the machinery of the Court set in motion to break off the match; but, added the young Dessauer, with the utter calmness of conviction, 'I am so certain of Anna-Lise that I abandon the field to you without fear.' He then warned them emphatically, under threats of his anger, against any violence; and said naïvely to his mother:

'Und nun, Frau Mutter, geh' ich zur Anna-Lise, sag' ihr, dass ich verreise und wie sie sich während der Zeit verhalten soll. Die Instruktionen die ich ihr gebe, sie werden ganz einfach seyn und etwa so lauten: "Immer resolut, Anna-Lise, immer resolut, forsch, fest. Was sie auch thun mögen, stör' Dich an Nichts. Ich komme

wieder, und dann, Anna-Lise, ist die Hochzeit." Und wenn ich Das der Anna-Lise sage, dann thut sie auch so: darauf kann ich mich verlassen. Du kannst dir überhaupt gar nicht denken, Frau Mutter, wie wir für einander passen. Was ich will, das will auch die Anna-Lise, und was die Anna-Lise will, das will auch ich. Selbst auch für den Soldatenstand und das Kriegerleben hat sie eine so grosse Vorliebe.* In this happy frame of mind, full of confidence in his beloved, delighted with the prospect of travel and of adventure, the young soldier Prince leaves Dessau for the first time.

Leopold could scarcely have fully anticipated the extent of the persecution which began for poor Anna-Lise when he was fairly away. Her own father, and another suitor, female and other relatives, the Regent, and the Court emissaries, were all engaged in trying to shake the faith of the lonely girl. Leopold, however, knew Anna well, and he judged rightly in relying upon her truth. She received from him one letter, sent by means of a friend, which was written from Berlin, and announced, rapturously, that the Elector had given him the Anhalt

* The above characteristic speech, given by Mr. Hersch to his hero, I shall thus translate, 'for the benefit of country gentlemen.' 'And now, mamma, I am going to Anna-Lise, to tell her that I am about to start, and to tell her how she is to behave in my absence. The instructions that I shall give her will be very simple, and will run about as follows: "Always resolute, Anna-Lise, resolute, firm, strong. Don't let yourself be put out by anything they may do. I shall return, and then, Anna-Lise, then we shall marry." And when I tell Anna-Lise to do that, she will do it; I can rely upon that. You can't imagine, mamma, how well we suit each other. What I will, that will also Anna-Lise; and what Anna-Lise wishes, I wish also. She has even the very greatest delight in soldiering and in the life of war.'

regiment. He said that he should not write again, because he knew that his letters would be intercepted by the Regent; and then, in his characteristic way, he adjures his 'herz allerliebster Schätz, Anna-Lise,' to repulse all attacks, to remain true to him, and to believe entirely in his unchanging truth and affection. All which pretty Anna-Lise punctually does.

Von Salberg brings her one day a forged letter from Leopold, in which his betrothal to the Princess Adelgunde is announced. Anna-Lise laughs at him, and drives the Hofmarschall half mad with mocking banter. She knows the Prince's style, and knows that the smooth, fluent letter read by von Salberg was never written by her rough Leopold. In order to compare handwriting, she shows him, with triumphant mischief, a real letter from Leopold, and the 'high-sniffing Excellency' is at once furious and astonished. Her father is, however, her greatest worry, for he is always in the house, is of a tearfully pious character, and is very aggravating in his constant lachrymose appeals; but nothing could shake the love of the resolute true-hearted German girl, until one day old Föhse, instigated by the Regent, and in a state of more than usual weeping impressiveness, explained to his daughter, that, legally, she could not as a burgher-maiden be the full wife of a Prince; that her children would be incapable of succession; and that, as Leopold was an only son, the royal race would die out in Anhalt-Dessau if she persisted in marrying the heir to the throne. He enlarged upon the injury to her lover and to the country, and upon the wrong which she would do to the house of Anhalt-Dessau. This point of view had never before suggested itself to Anna-Lise,

who looked upon marriage with her Prince as marriage merely with her own true love; her love since childhood's years; and she was terribly affected by the new conflict excited between love and duty.

She soon took her resolution. Arraying herself in mourning, as a sign of widowed hope, she went to the Regent, and formally announced that, for the reasons above given, she was ready to give up her love and to refuse to marry her Leopold. Firm as she was in her new resolution, the girl's heart was breaking; and the better nature of the Regent was touched by the unselfishness, the dignity, and the deep grief of poor Anna-Lise. Where, the Princess began to think, where would Leopold find a more royal bride than this noble, true-hearted, self-sacrificing burgher-maiden? The Princess half regretted that she had been successful in her diplomacy; but successful, at last, she was, for Anna-Lise would never waver in her truth and loyalty to the unselfish and lofty love she bore.

Let us now see what the pupil and tutor are doing on their travels. After going to Berlin, and there obtaining the Anhalt regiment from the Elector, the wild Prince and his 'governor' started for Italy. The tutor had no easy task when he attempted, as he sometimes did, to influence or control his Eisenkopf pupil. Impossible to educe from Leopold much enthusiasm for the 'beauties of Italian literature,' or for museums of curiosities and antiquities. On the other hand, he took the most vivid interest in every army, in every parade-ground and drill that he could find; and was always in the fencing schools or in the saddle. A man instinct with interest in the living present,

and wholly wanting in love for scholarship or love for science—except the science of war. He had many adventures, and was a source of constant trouble and anxiety to his kind-hearted but weak-headed 'bear-leader.' Always original is this young Leopold, full of fire, force, vitalism, and virile energy. He did not speak much of Anna-Lise. If interrogated by the timid Chalisac, he answered curtly or fiercely, but invariably spoke of his marriage as a matter of course. His young, strenuous manhood has not in it a strain of depravity, or a tendency to dissipation. Capable of a noble love, he was also capable of a noble constancy. The tone of manners of his day did not much affect this strong original; and he remained chaste and utterly faithful to the one woman that he loved. His trust in her was the measure of his truth to her. There was a high knightly ideal in the rough, strong soul of the born soldier Prince.

It is just to Chalisac to record, that the little French tutor had some insight into the greatness which lay hidden beneath the rough force of the young Dessauer. He foresaw and foretold the great man latent in the wild youth. He understood the Prince much better than the Princess-Regent comprehended her son. To her conception, he was wanting in elegance, in sentiment, in all good taste. To her he appeared bearish, unmanageable, dangerous, self-willed; and then with such a terrible tendency towards marriage with an apothecary's daughter! But Chalisac saw the restless yearning for great deeds, the nobleness beneath the surface roughness, the energy, the originality, the genius of his pupil. Leopold arrived at Turin just as war began, and plunged

into action with a wild ecstasy of delight. Life became earnest and calm for him so soon as he got to real work. He had found the true outlet for his unquiet yearnings. In his first campaign he made his mark as a great captain, and was raised to the rank of general. When peace followed victory he burned to share his triumphs and his laurels with his Anna-Lise, and marched the Anhalt regiment impetuously back to Dessau.

He had not written to her since the first letter from Berlin. She had never written to him. In those days letters were serious matters, and the young couple knew well that their letters would be intercepted. He had remained utterly true to his love in thought as in deed, and he had the fullest confidence in her loyalty to him. He knew nothing of the succession argument, or of the effect which it had had upon his noble Anna-Lise; and so, singing with his soldiers his own Dessauer March, Leopold nears his own city.

And now, from afar, comes on the wind a strain of martial music, and all Dessau prepares to welcome back its young hero Prince. The Princess-Regent, surrounded by her Court, expects the princely heir; the mother longs to see her long-absent son. Hark! there are his drums; and now the shouts of the people and the tramp of marching men. He will be here directly, to pay his duty to his mother. There can be no doubt about that. *That* must be his first object in Dessau. Strange! the noise seems not to come towards the Schloss. Presently Salberg announces, with horror, that Leopold has marched straight to Föhse's 'Apotheke,' and is now with Anna-Lise, while the Anhalt regiment stands at ease before the house. In the

midst of the Court consternation, the Prince suddenly enters, dragging the unwilling Anna-Lise by the hand. Without greeting or salutation to any there, he demands angrily, 'Wer hat dem Mädel die Mucken in den Kopf gesetzt?' ('Who has been filling the girl's head with whims and nonsense?') Without replying to the question, the Princess asks if he has no word of greeting for his mother, but obtains no answer. It is evident that Anna-Lise has used the succession argument as a reason for breaking off their intimacy, and that Leopold, rightly enough, suspects his mother. He is furious with the whole Court, and announces suddenly his intention of marrying Anna-Lise there and then. Leaning out of window, he calls for a company of his regiment and for the chaplain. A dreadfully impetuous young Prince, with a very dangerous fire in his eyes, and not at all in the mood for polite argument! The Regent is conquered, and asks only for time to deck Anna-Lise as a prince's bride. This request is graciously granted, and the Prince and his mother are reconciled. Leopold sends for the whole Föhse family, and ordains that his father-in-law shall remain apothecary as a monument to the fact that the Prince of Anhalt-Dessau has married his people. He is now of age, and is the reigning prince. Anna-Lise returns, in bridal splendour, full of modest happiness, and Leopold introduces her to his grenadiers. He orders every one at once into the church, telling the chaplain to be brief in his function. He commands the artillery to fire a royal salute, and the band of

the regiment to march before the bridal party into church. Then, after a hearty soldier's kiss, he takes the blushing Anna-Lise by the hand. Love and faith have conquered, and the apothecary's daughter becomes the happy wife of her long-loved Leopold, and is now Princess of Anhalt-Dessau.

Here the curtain falls upon the one worthy love romance in the stormy life of the old Dessauer. Pleasant it is to relate that they lived long and happily together; that no born princess could have been a better princess, a truer wife and mother than was our dear little Anna-Lise, the burgher- maiden of Dessau. Leopold was wise as well as true.

No touch of vanity or of weakness stained this sterling mass of genuine worth and manhood. His 'growl of rugged prayer, much in earnest,' was heard for the last time on that field from which his spirit fled in the red rage of fight; but his long work was done, and was well done. It lasts to this day, and will last longer yet, in the great fortunes of the great country which he served so sturdily and strenuously. An example he—an example still shining—for later Prussian warriors; a teacher he, one whose teaching is still followed as the toilsome and thorough inventor of modern tactics; tactics which have just proved their vital force, on many a battle-field of fame. In the recent glorious war, in which an heroic 'nation in arms' defeated so thoroughly an insolent and immoral invader, Germany owes much, very much, to the spirit and to the life-long labour of the grand OLD DESSAUER.

LATE COMFORT.

I SAW my body dead, upon a day :
No tears, no kiss had fallen upon my face,
But common hands within my loveless place
Gave me scant heed and left me where I lay.
But, while I watched, about the twilight gray,
One entering knelt beside my body there ;
She had not loved me in the days that were,
Footsore she was and weary of the way.

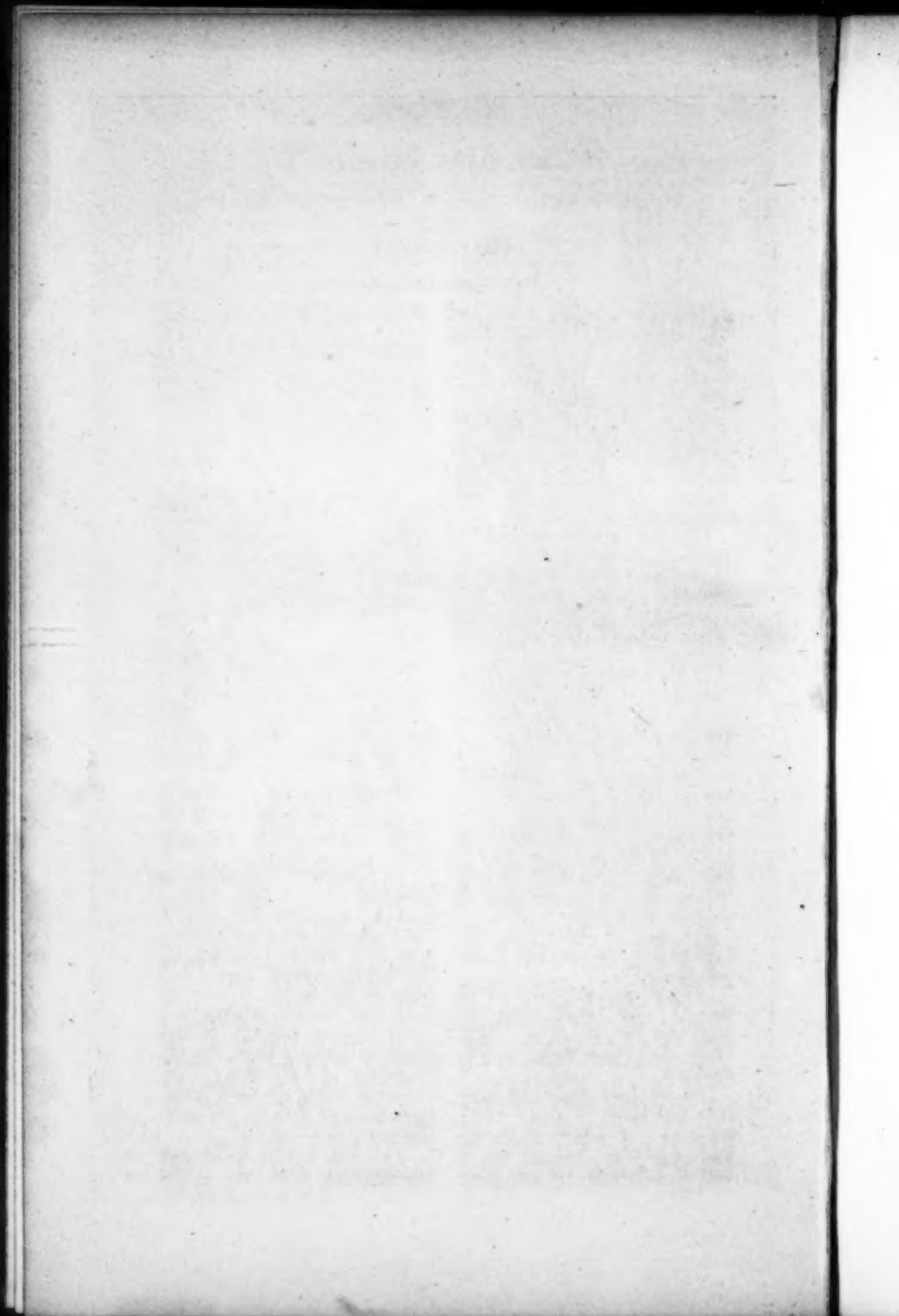
And when she saw the last love-song I made,
The last, unended, in my fingers laid,
Her warm lips fell upon my cold lips dead ;
And then I saw her kisses and her tears,
And I forgave her all the cruel years,
Knew she had loved me, and was comforted.

FREDERICK EDWARD WEATHERLY.



Drawn by Dover Wilson.]

LATE COMFORT.



'MY OWN CHILD.'

BY FLORENCE MARRYAT, AUTHOR OF 'LOVE'S CONFLICT, ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXV.

FIVE THOUSAND A YEAR!

THE next morning I renewed the subject of the ball of my own accord. I was so afraid my darling might be fretting in secret over her disappointment.

'May, dear! I am writing to Lady Power, and I shall ask her opinion as to whether you may go to this dance or not. I dare say she will see no objection, and then we shall feel quite safe.'

'No, don't ask her, mothie!'

'Why not, my dear?'

'Because I don't care about it—indeed, I would rather not go.'

'You have changed your mind rather suddenly, May,' I said in surprise.

'I don't think I've changed my mind, mother; that is to say, of course I should like the dancing, and the fun, and all that; but I didn't know, you see—you never told me before of the reason there was for my not coming out in a place like Brussels; and I understand plainly, dear, that my *début* should be different from that of other girls—that I ought, in fact, to make my first appearance with a splash and a dash.'

She laughed lightly as she finished her sentence, but I saw that she meant it.

'*Five thousand a year!*' she went on; 'I could hardly sleep last night for thinking of it. How much does that make a day, mother?'

'Oh, May! try not to look upon it in that light. I should break my heart if you were to become fond of money. You are not to have it, remember, till you come

of age, and then I suppose there will be proper people selected to look after the major part of it for you; and the allowance which will be reserved for your own private use you must try to lay out in the manner which will bring you most credit with God, and not with man.'

'You mean by helping the poor. Why, of course I shall, mothie! But why are you so serious about it? Money is a very good thing to have!'

'Sometimes, darling.'

'Always! when we know how to spend it. And we have never had more than *just enough*. There are dozens of things I know you want, and would like to have, that you can't afford yourself. But you shall have them all when I get my money, dear, see if you don't!'

She came dancing up to me as she spoke, and looked with her bright, sweet Irish face into mine.

'So I am not to mention the bachelors' ball,' I said, with a view to changing the subject, which annoyed me, I hardly knew why. The fact is, I instinctively felt that the peaceful years I had spent in the rearing of my own child were rapidly drawing to a close; and in prospect of our return to Gentian's Cross and the hospitality of Lady Power, I experienced much the same sensations as I had done on the occasion of my first visit there.

'No! but I wish you'd ask grandmamma what she thinks

about our going to Italy before we return home.'

'To Italy, May! That's a new idea.'

'I've often wished to go there, and so have you, and we may never have another opportunity. And I'm getting just a little bit sick of dear old Brussels, mother, aren't you?'

'I'm very sick of it,' I responded with energy.

'And it would be so charming to see Rome together! When are we supposed to return to Ireland, mother?'

'Next May,' I said with a sigh.

'And this is October. We shouldn't have more than a few months there altogether. And I want some good singing and Italian lessons terribly. Can't we manage it, darling?'

'I have no doubt we can, May. The idea strikes me as pleasantly as it does you. I have wanted a change for some time, and there is no occasion to ask Lady Power's leave. But I will tell her of our intentions by to-day's post.'

The prospect charmed me, as much as any prospect could charm me just then. I considered the proposal as a happy inspiration on my child's part, and wondered I had not thought of it myself. To quit Brussels at that period was the very best thing that I could do. True, that Lord Eustace Annerley had kept his word and left the town; but I never felt quite sure whether he might not return; and without that fear there were too many sad recollections associated with the various places we had frequented together, to render it possible that I should ever take the same pleasure in visiting them again.

May and I experienced little difficulty in carrying out our project. We had no personal property but such as we could easily take

with us, and only one maid who was permanently attached to our service, and accompanied us everywhere. So that at the end of a month we found ourselves comfortably settled in Genoa, which we had decided to make our first resting-place.

During the next six months we moved quietly about from city to city, just suiting our own inclinations as to how long we should remain in each; and if I was not happy or entirely at ease, I was, at least, content. It contented me to watch my darling girl enjoying herself—to hear the expressions of admiration which followed her blonde beauty wherever it was seen—to take interest in her various studies; and, above all, to mark how completely ignorant she appeared to be that anything had ever happened to disturb the inner peace of my life. We staid at Florence, Rome, Genoa, Naples, and Leghorn; and I had learned, by reason of the blessed vision vouchsafed to me at Paris, to bear my little burden so manfully that, had it not been for an occasional heart-stab as old remembrances came over me, I should have almost believed that I was cured. But, as far as my physical health was concerned, I was certainly not strong. Up to that period of my life, I had been a remarkably healthy woman, never very robust in appearance or reality, but with a good appetite, an unimpaired digestion, and great capability for bearing fatigue. Now, little by little, my appetite failed me, my sleep became restless and interrupted, and a very slight exertion would be followed by unusual languor. For some time I attributed the change to the climate of Genoa, but I did not find that the temperature of other places agreed with me better. I laid all the blame then

upon Italy, and decided that I should not recover my usual strength until I had quitted it again.

But I was very anxious that my dear child should not have the least suspicion that I was ailing, and seriously cautioned my maid not to breathe a hint that might alarm her. I knew how affectionate and sensitive a disposition she possessed—how easily she would become frightened over a mere trifle, if it concerned me—and I would not run the chance of making her think it necessary to leave Italy one moment earlier than she need, for my sake. So I locked this little secret in my own breast (as I had locked the other), and fully believed that it needed but my native air to set me up again.

We returned to England in April, when my daughter had just completed her sixteenth year—I, my thirty-second! Lady Power had made a great point of our being at Gention's Cross by the beginning of May, as the Vice-Regal drawing-room and ball, at which my child was to be presented and make her *début*, were to be held during the course of the month. How heavy was my heart on the day we turned our feet homewards! A presentiment of evil hung over me for which I could not account. May was blooming and happy; full of love and duty to myself; a daughter any mother might be proud to own; and she was about to be launched on the world under the most favourable auspices. Surrounded by affection and luxury—with Lady Power and myself as her chaperones—with a bright present, and still brighter future, what could I, under the most extravagant circumstances, have wished more for my child than she was about to receive? It

would seem as though the wildest hopes of any parent were about, in her case, to be amply realised. Yet I was unhappy—morbidly, wickedly unhappy, as I told myself. The old feeling of fear with which I had formerly approached the Power family had died out. I was now a woman of mature age, and independent of everybody. I knew that if I disapproved of anything that was said or done with respect to my daughter, I had the right to take her away then and there, and keep her, until she became of age, under my own control. And I had determination enough to carry such a resolution into effect, should it at any time become necessary to do so. But I was not in the least afraid of any such necessity arising. I knew that Lady Power was propriety itself—and generosity itself where May was concerned—and my child would be at all times as safe under her wing as mine. It was not unkindness or inattention I feared for her; it was too much love, too much indulgence.

The old curse of jealousy and desire of complete appropriation was stirring in my breast again, and I felt, in taking May back to Ireland, as though I were once more relinquishing half my claim on her affection, and offering it up as a victim on the altar of the Powers' pride in the possession of their heiress.

This was very weak of me—very foolish. I hope it may have been partly attributable to the fact of my ill-health, that I did not show much more strength of mind at thirty-two than I had done at sixteen. But during the last six months I had clung to my child perhaps more than ever as the sole good thing I had left; and to part with even a thousandth part of her, at the demand of the world, was a sacrifice to me.

May did not share my gloomy prognostications in any way. On the contrary, she was full of life and spirits—sometimes, perhaps, almost too much so. For since the day on which I had thought fit to intrust her with the knowledge of her prospective fortune, I had observed a difference in my child. Not towards me—never towards me, thank God!—but with regard to the rest of the world.

Her character appeared to change, or rather I should say, perhaps, that it suddenly developed. It has been mentioned before that Hugh, young as he was at the time of his death, had evinced a very impulsive yet determined disposition, and his child inherited these traits from him. And, furthermore, she had taken from me a sharper, quicker temper than her father ever had. She conceived strong likes and dislikes, and took no pains to conceal them—as in the case of Lord Eustace Annerley. I do not believe that, by nature, she was avaricious, but she was fond of power; and the prospect of a large fortune represented power to her.

With the knowledge of what was coming, she betrayed a disposition to haughtiness which pained me. She became dominant and overbearing to her fellows in a manner I could not bear to see. Yet I consoled myself with the idea of how much better, in reality, she was than the majority of her companions.

'She is very clever,' I thought, 'and she is very young. When she grows older, and sees of how very little value talent is compared with goodness and virtue, she will learn to think more humbly of herself. Life is just opening before her: new ideas, fresh theories, crop up in her mind each day; and in the ignorance of youth she

fancies, because they are new to her, they must be so to all the world; and because she has not the experience wherewith to combat them, they who do so wish to quarrel with her. She is too positive at present—too sure of herself in everything—but she has a large heart and a large mind, and they are the safest ballast to take us steadily through life.'

So I battled with my own conviction, unwilling to think my darling could be anything short of perfect; doubly so to harbour the idea that the prospect of so paltry an acquisition as wealth could have the power to make her think herself better than her companions.

It was evening when we arrived at Gentian's Cross. We had had a rough and fatiguing passage from Holyhead, and I was fairly worn out. But the family carriage was in waiting for us at the Dublin station, and I had no need to do more than rest till it landed us at the house itself. Lady Power, her daughters Margaret and Blanche (Norah had married an officer in the army, and gone out to India with him about a year before), and Mrs. Delancey were assembled in the library to welcome us.

'Good gracious, Katie, how ill you look!' was the greeting with which Juliet received me.

May, who was in her grandmother's arms, turned sharply at the words.

'Ill, Aunt Juliet!' she exclaimed. 'Mother's not ill. She's only tired.'

'That's all; only tired,' I echoed, with an attempt at a smile. I felt as if I were sinking into the ground.

'Juliet is always a bit of a croaker, especially in regard to you, Katharine,' said Lady Power, as she condescended to imprint a

kiss upon my forehead. 'A good night's rest is all you need to set you up again.'

'Well! if the difference in your appearance is entirely due to fatigue,' said Juliet, bluntly, 'all I can say is fatigue has an extraordinary effect on you. Why, you are mere skin and bone compared to what you were last year!'

'We felt the heat in Florence very much,' I responded quickly. 'I think May has lost flesh also.'

'Not a bit of it. She is looking perfectly well.'

'Frances is looking charming,' added her old grandmother, who did not seem as if she could take her eyes off my child. She had not dropped, and never did, the habit of opposing me on the subject of my daughter's name. 'And she is the very image of what I was at her age. She will make quite a sensation at the Drawing-room on the 24th.'

'Or her dress will,' remarked Margaret Power, who was the most unpleasant of them all.

'Such a dress!' said Juliet. 'It is worth looking at, Frances. Grandmamma sent all the way to Paris for it.'

'To Worth's?' exclaimed May.

'Yes, to Worth's.'

'Mother, isn't that jolly?' she said, turning to me, with sparkling eyes. The remarks on my appearance did not seem to have had any effect on her. I was so thankful.

'I think your mother will be glad to get to her own room, Frances,' said Juliet. 'Suppose you go and make yourselves comfortable before dinner, and we will have a formal inspection of your wonderful dress afterwards.'

I managed to drag through the dinner-hour somehow, and as soon as it was concluded, in pity to my dear May's evident anxiety, we

were all ushered with much pomp into a spare room, where, laid out upon the bed, was Worth's last effort on behalf of the Power family.

It looked very simple, but, like all costumes by the same milliner, it was a triumph of good taste and extravagance.

The petticoat and bodice were almost entirely covered with point-lace. The train, of soft, creamy white satin, was trimmed with the same costly material, relieved at intervals by bunches of snowy white feathers. There was not a thread of colour anywhere. All was pure, spotless, and bridal-like.

I pictured my child's golden hair contrasting with the shining white drapery, and could not refrain from an expression of admiration. As for May, she was speechless with delight.

'She will wear the family diamonds with it,' remarked Lady Power, in a tone of gratified ambition. 'Margaret thinks it is not orthodox she should do so until they become hers by law; but it is my wish, and no one has the right to gainsay me.'

'Dear grandmamma!' said May, kissing her.

'You are the only hope left to me, my dear Frances, remember,' responded the old lady; 'and whilst you are a good and affectionate girl, I shall consider nothing that I can do too much for you.'

'May is the best daughter that ever lived,' I interposed fondly. 'She is not likely to behave less well in any other relation of life.'

'Ah! my dear, so we thought of her poor father,' replied Lady Power, with a significant intonation that told me I was not quite forgiven, even after sixteen years of penance, for the part I had taken in that transaction.

'Have you thought of what dress you are going to wear at the Drawing-room yourself, Katie?' said Juliet, with an evident view to changing the conversation.

'No! I am not to be presented, I hope!' I replied, with a comical look of dismay.

'Nonsense! you must go with your daughter. I think your absence would be very conspicuous.'

'I never dreamt of it. I never imagined it would be necessary. I thought Lady Power was going to present May to Lady ——.'

'And no more it is necessary, my dear,' said my mother-in-law sharply. 'Not in the slightest degree. I shall, of course, present my granddaughter to Lady —— under any circumstances, and there is no occasion at all for your troubling yourself in the matter.'

'But you would like to see Frances at her first ball,' persisted Juliet.

'Can't I go to the ball unless I attend the Drawing-room?'

'No; the invitations are only issued for those who have done so. And I think it will be a marked omission if you are not present at your daughter's *début*.'

'Oh, yes, dear mothie, you *must* go to the ball,' pleaded May. 'I couldn't enjoy it without you. I shouldn't dance a bit, thinking of you at home. And do have a mauve dress, darling; mauve becomes you so beautifully; and send to old Worth for it. There's plenty of time. And you will look so pretty, and so young, and so nice—I know you will.'

'She'll be taking off all your partners if you don't take care, May,' said Juliet, laughing.

'Mothie, darling, you *will* go—won't you?'

'Why, May, what should I do with a dress from Worth when I had got it? And mauve, too, you

silly child! I wonder you don't suggest pink at once. No; if I *do* go, it will be in half-mourning, and the Court milliner in Dublin will make me a dress quite good enough for all the use I shall put it to.'

'I should go entirely in white, if I were you,' said Juliet.

'Perhaps I may, dear. I couldn't wear colours.'

'Never mind, so you *do* go,' interposed my child.

The conversation did not seem to please Lady Power. She had been fidgeting about from the commencement of it, and now she struck in tartly:

'It would be quite absurd of Katharine to go in white when her daughter is in white also. People would laugh at her.'

'I don't see that at all, mamma,' said Juliet decidedly. 'Katie's dress need not be made in the same style as Frances', nor of the same material; but much older women than herself wear white when it suits them. And it especially suits Katie's chestnut hair.'

'There is no need of her appearing at the Drawing-room at all,' repeated Lady Power, preparing to quit the room; 'but, if she *does* go, I hope Katharine's own sense will show her it would be ridiculous to go tricked out like a young girl of sixteen.'

I felt too ill to dispute the subject with her, and, whispering to Juliet that I was tired and wished to go to bed, I sought my own room instead of accompanying the party downstairs. May—dear, darling child—wanted to accompany me as usual, but I persuaded her to remain with her grandmother, and resigned myself to the services of my maid.

I had lain in bed, utterly weary, but very wide awake, for perhaps two hours, before my child came up to bid me good-night. We

were not to sleep in the same room, which was a trouble to me, and in the hurry of arrival May had not had time to enter my apartment before. When she did, she looked round it with dissatisfaction.

'What a nasty little room they've given you,' she said.

'Little, darling! Why, it's larger than our old room at Brussels.'

'But it's half the size of mine, mothie. I think the housemaid must have made a mistake, and shown us to the wrong ones.'

'Oh no, I dare say it's all right,' I answered quietly; 'and I like a small room, May.'

I had no doubt whatever, myself, upon the subject. As it had been in days gone by, so it was now. The heiress of Gentian's Cross must have a good room, but it little signified how the heiress's mother was served.

'Grandmamma has been showing me the family jewels,' said May, as she seated herself on my bed. 'How beautiful they are! Have you ever seen them, mothie?'

'Never, darling.'

'There are two sets of diamonds; and one has been just reset by Hunt and Roskell for my presentation. They do glitter so! And then there are two sets of pearls, and one of emeralds, and one of rubies and opals—and the rings, mothie, I should think there must be fifty rings if there is one, and they all fit into a large case made expressly for them. And grandmamma has shown me Hugh's portraits. She has three miniatures; one taken when he was a baby, and one when he was three years old, and one when he was twelve. And she has given me the baby one. What a dear little baby he must have been! But of course you've seen them, mothie, often and often?'

'I've never seen them,' I cried, in a voice of pain. 'She might have shown them to me. They would have been such a comfort years ago, when I was grieving so bitterly for his sake. Where is your miniature, darling? Let me see it—do!'

'I'll run and fetch it, mother. I left it on my toilet-table.'

Whilst she was absent my thoughts were very hard. Lady Power was not one whit altered. I should have the same battle to fight over again, and I determined that, cost what it might, I would attend the Drawing-room and the Ball. She should not wrest my daughter from my arms now, any more than she had been able to do then. But when May returned with the miniature of her dead father, taken at a twelvemonth, the sight of the innocent baby face looking out from its little old-fashioned cap—a face so like her own at the same age—softened my rebellious spirit, and I could only remember with gratitude what a blessing she had been to me, and how mercifully she had been preserved.

'It is just what you were at the same age, May,' I said, as I examined the miniature. 'I wonder Lady Power never showed it to me. She might have known how it would interest me, if only on that account.'

'Keep it, dear mothie. I don't care about it,' said May carelessly. 'I would much rather you had it.'

'Oh no, May. Thank you for the kind thought, but you must not give away your grandmother's presents. Besides, this is an heirloom. But I should like to keep it just for to-night, darling. It looks so familiar to me. So like you both'—and I kissed the picture as I spoke.

'I say, mother,' said May, in a

mysterious voice, 'do you know if all the furniture and ornaments come to me with Gentian's Cross?'

'I don't know, dear. I never asked. Why?'

'Because there are several things here I should like to have—indeed, that I think I ought to have. Hugh's portraits, for instance, and the family pictures, and that bust of my grandfather, and the books. I shouldn't care a pin about the furniture—it's so old-fashioned; I expect I shall very soon turn it out of doors, if I do get it; but the other things should go with the house, by rights.'

'I don't know about the "right" of it, May. Of course everything is properly and legally settled, and in due course you will have your own. But try and not think so much about it, darling. I can't bear that you should be always thinking of it, for fear it should never come to pass.'

'It *must* come to pass if I live,' said May, as she jumped lightly off the bed. 'Good-night, my own sweet mother. Sleep well, and get up quite jolly in the morning.'

'I will if I can, my darling,' I answered lightly. She had nearly crossed the threshold of my room when she turned back again.

'You're not really ill—are you, mother?'

'Certainly not, dear.'

'Because Aunt Juliet has been making an awful fuss about you downstairs. She says you are looking wretched, and that you must have been overdoing it, and all sorts of things.'

'Aunt Juliet is always too kind. You know best how I have been.'

'But you *do* look rather peakey.'

'Well the best remedy for that disease is rest; so be off to bed, you chatterbox, and leave me to go to sleep.'

She ran away with a laugh as

I spoke. Sweet, light-hearted laughter! How seldom was I to hear it after that night!

CHAPTER XXVI.

I FALL ILL.

BUT though May had left me, and everything around was conducive to repose, I could not sleep. At first it was only a severe pain in my head, and a wearied, *beaten* feeling in my limbs, that prevented my going off; but then succeeded a period of intense wakefulness, during which I tried hard *not* to think, but found it impossible. Visions of the long ago blended themselves with prospects of the future—the faces of Hugh and May, and Lord Eustace, became mingled together. I was now a maid, now a wife, now a widow, now a mother, now nothing at all, but only Katharine Power trying with all her might to banish thought and court forgetfulness instead. I heard the clocks strike one hour after another, and each hour seemed more interminably long than the last, and yet I appeared to be neither asleep nor awake, but lying in a state of drowsy consciousness. Once I found myself standing by the chest of drawers, having apparently left my bed in an aimless manner, and without being aware of the fact.

'Oh, this will never do,' I said to myself. 'Coming back to the old place has set me rambling. I *will* go to sleep! It only requires a strong effort of will to enable us to do what we choose.'

So, having drank a large draught of water, I found my way back to bed again, remarking, as I went, how very dry and hot my hands were, and how empty and light my head appeared to be. However

I did go to sleep that time, though very unsatisfactorily, and when my maid appeared to call me in the morning, I was too ill to rise.

'Don't tell Miss May,' I urged, 'but I have such a very bad pain in my head, Parker, that I think it would be wiser if I were to lie in bed.'

Parker did not tell May, but she went and fetched Mrs. Delancey, who sent immediately to Dublin for the family doctor. And his fiat was that I was going to be ill.

They did not tell me so at first, but the trouble broke gradually upon me, and indeed I had suspected it for some time past. May's alarm, when the news was communicated to her, was sufficient to make any mother conceal her symptoms as much as possible.

'Oh, you are going to die! I am sure my mother is going to die,' she whimpered. 'What shall I do without you? Oh, my God, let me die too!'

'May, darling,' I said, as I took her strong young hand in mine, 'you will make me really ill if you give way like this. You have seen so little of sickness, my dear, that you imagine it to be much worse than it is. I fancy I have carried home some of the Genoese malaria with me. It is very unfortunate, but all I have to do is to lie here quietly and take my medicine till I get well again. You won't retard my recovery by making me unhappy, will you, May?'

Her aunts and grandmother joined their persuasions to mine, until, between us, we had quite blinded my darling's eyes to the fact of there being any danger in my illness; and then I was satisfied and content to take whatever Heaven might see fit to send me.

And Heaven was very merciful. There followed a period of much pain and sleeplessness and a little

unconsciousness, during which I was faithfully nursed by my dear child and my sister, Mrs. Delancey; and at the end of a fortnight I was pronounced convalescent, and allowed to leave my bedroom. But the weakness that supervened was so startling that the doctor shook his head discontentedly, and advised my instant removal from Dublin.

'We must send you to some bracing seaside place in England, madam,' he remarked on that occasion. 'This country is much too enervating for your constitution, and it will take some little time to cure the mischief Genoa did you.'

Secretly I was pleased at the idea. I should have my own child to myself again. But it only wanted a fortnight to the time of the Drawing-room, and, although I had, of course, given up all idea of attending it myself, I felt I could not take May away before she had been presented.

'I can go to England the beginning of June, doctor, but not before.'

'You must go before. It is absolutely necessary. You must go at once.'

'I can't go at once. My daughter is to be presented on the 24th, and so many preparations have been made for the occasion, I could not think of upsetting them by taking her away.'

'Then you must go without your daughter.'

'Without May? Oh, doctor, I couldn't!'

'Well, madam, all I can say is, your health depends upon your leaving Dublin at once—to-morrow—to-day, if it were possible. If your daughter's presentation is of more consequence than your life, stay for it; but if not, you must leave her behind or take her with you.'

'But, doctor, you perplex me sadly. Can it really be so serious as that?'

'It is so serious, madam, that I am going at once to speak to Lady Power and Mrs. Delancey, and tell them that if they do not see my directions carried out I cannot answer for the consequences.'

I almost laughed at the idea, for I only felt weak and disinclined to exert myself; but half an hour afterwards, Juliet entered my room with a face full of anxious concern, and eager to persuade me to leave at once.

'The doctor says your pulse is terribly low, dear Katie, and that we are not to lose an hour in sending you to the seaside. It's a great worry, of course, and just at this time, too; but it must be done, and the sooner the better. What do you think of Brighton? It is the most bracing air I know of.'

'But, Juliet, how can I put off May's presentation? What will Lady Power say? After all her kindness, too.'

'But why need it be put off? You could not have gone, any way.'

'You mean that I am to go away without her?'

'I am sure it will be the best thing to do. You shall not go alone, Katie. I will go with you; and we shall, of course, take Parker.'

'And leave May behind with her grandmother?'

'And leave May behind with her grandmother,' repeated Mrs. Delancey.

'She will never consent to it,' I said decidedly. 'May would break her heart if I were to go without her. It is useless to think of it, Juliet. It cannot be.'

'Don't you think we could talk May into it, Katie?'

'I am sure you couldn't. Why, she has never been really separated from me in her life; and to part us now, when I am ailing. It would drive my poor child half crazy.'

'I think, if the matter is put before her in its proper light, that she may become reconciled to it. You see, it's not like an every-day occurrence, Katie, that has but to be put off till next week. If Frances—I cannot get out of the way of calling her by that name—is not presented this season she must wait till next. And, between you and me, that dress from Worth's cost a hundred pounds, although all the lace belonged to my mother.'

'I dare say it did,' I answered carelessly. The dress appeared of very little consequence in my eyes. 'And of course it is very unfortunate I should have been so stupid as to fall ill at this juncture; but it can't be helped, so what are we to do?'

'But you acknowledge the absolute necessity of your going away, dear?'

'Yes, I suppose so—since the doctor says I must.'

'Well, then, that's settled, and I shall start with you to-morrow. And now with regard to Frances. Have I your leave to persuade her to stay at Gentian's Cross, if I can?'

'Oh! certainly,' I replied, smiling to myself. 'Persuade her by all means, if you can.'

But in my secret heart I felt sure her attempt would fail.

Juliet called Parker, and having given her a few directions for the morrow, departed in search of May.

I awaited the issue of her mission with some little anxiety. I was afraid my child would feel the disappointment of putting off the Drawing-room ball on which she had been reckoning so long.

In about a quarter of an hour the door of my room opened gently, and May appeared upon the threshold. I saw, by her flushed face and tell-tale eyes, she had been crying. I held out my weak arms to her, and in another moment she was in them.

'Well, my pet,' I said lovingly, 'and are you very much disappointed?'

'Terribly, dear mother. Fancy your having to go away! It frightens me awfully, though Aunt Juliet says there is no need.'

'Aunt Juliet is right, my darling. There is no need of fear. Change of air is all I require to make me strong again. But I am thinking of you, my own child, and of this Drawing-room. It worries me so that I should be the cause of annoyance to you, or Lady Power.'

'Don't let it worry you, dear mother. Of course it won't be a bit the same to me, but I'll do the best I can to get through it without you; and as soon as ever it is over I shall come and join you.'

I started—just a very little. They *had* persuaded her, then. But I would not have let her see my disappointment for the world, for it was utterly selfish. I was ashamed of the feeling even whilst it passed through my heart.

'What has Aunt Juliet been saying to you?' I inquired softly. 'Tell me all about it.'

'Not much, mother dear. She told me first what the doctor had said—that it was absolutely necessary you should leave Dublin at once; and at first I wanted to go with you, of course.'

'Of course! I knew you would!' I echoed triumphantly, as I squeezed her tightly in my arms.

'But grandmamma and Aunt Juliet told me how much you wished me to remain and be pre-

sented; and I suppose, after all the fuss they've made, and the trouble they've been put to about it, it would be a pity to throw it up for the sake of a few days. Still, mother darling, I'm miserable at the thought of your going away without me, and unless Aunt Juliet were going with you, nothing on earth should make me stay behind; and I shall come soon, shan't I? You will send for me as soon as ever the Drawing-room is over, won't you?' my darling added, as she burst into tears upon my bosom.

I was quite content that she should remain at Gentian's Cross then, however much I might feel it. I soothed and comforted her with every soft and loving word in my vocabulary, and embraced her over and over again, as I assured her I should count the hours till we were reunited. I succeeded so well, that in a few moments, with the elasticity of youth, she was smiling through her tears, and planning all sorts of projects for our mutual enjoyment at the seaside.

But she shed tears again on more than one occasion before that day was concluded, and so fearful was I of witnessing her emotion when we should actually part, that I quite longed for the moment to be over.

It had been arranged between the doctor and the Powers that Juliet should take me to Hastings; and the next day, at an early hour, I was lifted into the carriage, and we set off upon our way.

I will not detail the parting between my own child and myself. I cannot! It was exquisitely painful then; it is far more painful to remember now.

* * * * *

We made the long, fatiguing journey by tedious stages, in con-

sideration of my weakness, and Juliet did all she could by kindness and attention to beguile the way.

I was too seriously inconvenienced on the journey, and too utterly prostrated by its effects, to have much leisure at first for fretting over my separation from May. As soon as I arrived at Hastings they put me into bed, and I did not leave it for several days.

But as soon as I had overcome the primary weakness and exhaustion consequent on my removal, I became painfully conscious of the dull, uncertain feeling of disappointment that was feeding on my heart. Selfish, exacting mother that I was!

How hateful, on a closer inspection, did my eager jealousy appear to myself!

What, then, would I have had my bright young daughter abandon the prospect of gaiety just opening before her, to chain herself down to my sick-bed?

Would I have permitted her to relinquish what, in her position as the heiress of Gentian's Cross, was almost a public duty, to gratify a private inclination, which was, after all, not a necessary one?

No, no! Both my heart and my reason repudiated the idea with indignation.

My darling was much better where she was—the light and the sunshine of the old house, as she would be the greatest attraction of the ball-room—than wasting her loveliness in my weak, stupid company, down at an uninteresting seaside place. Juliet and Parker could, and did, do all and more for me than I required; yet I could not help wishing, in a kind of silly, maudlin way, sometimes, that my own child had required just a little more persuasion

before she yielded to their advice and mine.

Oh, my selfish, greedy heart! would it always go on in this way, longing to have everything in the world for itself—hating to share its possessions with any one—thinking it must be first and foremost wherever its affections were placed?

Yet, my child! my own, own child! what had I in this life to comfort me but her? Was it to be wondered at if I grudged one moment of her company to others?

CHAPTER XXVII.

LETTERS!

As soon as we were fairly settled in Hastings, it may be well believed I took no such interest in anything 'as I did in the news that reached me by the daily post.

May's letters—and my darling wrote every day—were something like letters, and being the first I had ever received from her, possessed an unusual attraction for me. Each morning her envelope would contain three to four sheets of closely-written paper, detailing every circumstance of her life, which, with reading over and over again, and answering by slow and sometimes painful stages, were almost sufficient to fill up the measure of my monotonous and weary days. If I had passed a bad night, or waked before the country post was in, I became feverish with anticipation, or fearful that the postman had already passed our door. Once, when, by some accident, my darling missed writing to me, I suffered a relapse from fretting and suspense; and all the time I was counting the hours till the Drawing-room should be over, and May free to join me again.

She told me of everything that

occurred to her. Nothing could have been more minute, at first, than her description of the places she went to, the people she met, and the presents Lady Power lavished upon her. To day, it was a watch set with brilliants, that had been one of her grand-mamma's wedding presents; to-morrow, a horse, that May might learn the art of riding, for which purpose a master had been engaged to attend every morning at Gentian's Cross; or it was a new dress, or a flounce of old lace—or some ornament, luxury, or attention intended to do honour to the heiress of the Powers.

'Mamma seems to be launching out pretty freely,' said Juliet, laughing, one day after I had read her May's letter. 'She will altogether turn that little puss's head, if you don't take care. Diamonds for a child of that age! It's perfectly absurd! She never did a quarter so much for one of her own daughters.'

'I have always heard it said that women are fonder of their grandchildren than of their own children, though I cannot understand it,' I answered, with a faint smile.

'Mamma appears to be, at all events. I hope she won't spoil May.'

'She cannot spoil her!' I replied quickly. 'You have heard how, in the midst of describing all her new treasures, she harks back to the one idea of joining me here. May would leave them all to-morrow to come to her mother.'

'I should hope so!' said Juliet gravely. 'Does she mention the dinner party at Lady Carrigan's?'

'No! it is strange, but she seems to have forgotten it.'

But May had not forgotten it. In her next letter she said, 'Were you surprised, dearest mother, that I did not tell you about Lady

Carrigan's dinner? The fact is, I never went. Granny thought at the last that she had better not take me to so large a party before I had been introduced. So she and Aunt Margaret went alone, and I was not a bit disappointed. Fancy who took Aunt Margaret down to dinner! You'll never guess!

Lord Eustace Annerley! Granny says he inquired a great deal about me, and was surprised to hear I was going to be introduced so soon. He is to be at the ball, and I believe Granny invited him to come and see her here; but I hope to goodness he won't, for I'm sure I shan't be civil to him. I have always thought he behaved so ungratefully to you, after all your kindness to him, cutting away from Brussels as he did last year, and never coming near or writing to us again, after pretending to be such tremendous friends too! However, I know you like him, darling mother, so I'll try not to snub the creature, for your sake, but hope we shan't see too much of him all the same. By the way, I've got a bit of bad news to tell you, darling, and that is, I shan't be able to get away as soon after the presentation as I thought I should. I spoke to Granny about it this morning, and she says she must give a few dinner parties to introduce me to the county people; and then I suppose there will be their stupid visits to return. And all the time I am burning with impatience to get back to my own mammy, and wait on her as I used to do. But you are getting much stronger, dear, Aunt Juliet says, and we are all so thankful for that. It was charming to hear you had been out in a bath-chair! How soon will your own child be walking by the side of your chair, I wonder! Very, very, very soon she hopes, unless you have discarded them altogether before she

gets to Hastings, which will be better still. There now! that man has actually called! The servant has just brought in his card to me (Lord Eustace I mean), with a request from granny that I will go down to the drawing-room! And it is just post-time, so I cannot wait to tell you what he says to-day, but I will to-morrow, darling, so good-bye till then.'

I was much stronger; but the reception of this letter nearly threw me back again. I had concluded that Lord Eustace Annerley was with his family in Wicklow. I had had no reason to think otherwise, but I had never supposed he would have tried to gain an entry to Gentian's Cross, particularly when he knew that if I were not at the moment resident there, he had every chance of meeting me some time or other. At first I called him cruel, hard, unfeeling, voluntarily to place such an obstacle in the way of my forgetting him. Then, remembering the circumstances under which I had dismissed him, my heart softened, and I began to wonder whether, in trying to renew our acquaintanceship, he had any hope of removing the impression I had permitted him to retain, that I myself was heartless, frivolous, and deceitful. To a man like Lord Eustace, immersed in all manner of gaiety, the attractions of Gentian's Cross could not be so great in themselves as to preclude all suspicion of an ulterior motive in his desire to visit there. In a few days I found that my sister-in-law shared this opinion with me. I did not read to her the extract from May's letter which I have given above. It had so startling an effect on me that I was afraid lest she might connect it with the cause. It took me a couple of days to regain what I had lost after the reading of that

letter; and it shocked me to find that twelve months had made so little difference in my feelings, as to permit the thought of the possibility of meeting Lord Eustace Annerley again to disturb my equanimity. Juliet grieved over the consequences, and worried herself to find out whether they proceeded from cold, or indigestion, or any other of those molehills that turn into mountains for an invalid; but she never guessed the true reason that I relapsed.

Indeed, so well did I conceal it, that a few days afterwards she started the subject herself.

'I have heard from Margaret,' she said to me. 'Has May mentioned to you that your old Brussels friend, Lord Eustace Annerley, has been calling at Gentian's Cross?'

'Oh yes! She sent me a long description of his visit.'

'You have not been so intimate with him lately, have you?'

'No! He left Brussels last year, and we lost sight of him.'

'Your friendship did not extend to correspondence, then.'

'Oh dear, no!'

'But you liked him very much, Katie, didn't you?'

'Yes! I did, but May didn't,' I answered, with an effort.

'Oh, May was a baby then. She will alter all her likes and dislikes now. He's good-looking, isn't he?'

'Most people think so.'

'And his age?'

'How curious you are,' I said, with a faint smile. 'The same as Hugh's would have been had he lived—thirty-eight.'

'As old as that? Indeed! Mamma and Margaret seem to have taken a great fancy to him. They declare him to be everything that's charming. And he appears to be very attentive to May.'

'He was always kind to May,' I

replied, remembering, with a guilty throb, for whose sake he had loved her. 'And she was an ungrateful chit not to like him in return.'

'She will get over that,' said Juliet. 'I should think, from your description and Margaret's, that Lord Eustace was not a man to try to make friends with any one in vain. I wonder we have never met him before; but I suppose he has chiefly lived abroad. His father, Lord Riversdale, was well known to my father, and as you have heard, Lord Eustace was at school with poor Hugh. Their estates are good, but there's not much money in the family. But then they have blood to make up for it, you know, and that is everything. Is Lord Eustace what is called a marrying man, Katie?'

I blushed up to my eyes. Why was my sister-in-law questioning me after this fashion? I could not disabuse my mind of the idea that she had really guessed or heard something of the affair between Lord Eustace and me, and wished to ascertain the truth. If—I asked myself quickly—if the Power family all liked him and approved of the match, and May really should (as Juliet had suggested) alter all her former likes and dislikes, would it be lawful for me then to indulge my heart's desire, and consent to marry him? How my unchastened nature throbbed once more at the idea! Oh, Hugh! forgive me!

'Is he a likely man to marry?' repeated Mrs. Delancey.

'I should think he was,' I answered, trembling. 'More than once he spoke to me of the necessity of marriage to a man in his position. He is the eldest son, you know. He will be Lord Riversdale.'

'Of course! That is what mamma says. Well! I hope, Katie dear, that May will get over her

girlish nonsense about him, for *your* sake,' she said, as I thought, significantly. 'She seems to be in a fair way to do so, if we may trust Margaret's account,' she added, laughing, as she left the room.

I lay on my sofa with burning cheeks, wondering how much or how little Juliet knew, and who had been the person to enlighten her on a subject which I had breathed to no one. As soon as I was alone again I drew the packets of May's letters from under the cushion at my head, and read over the description she had sent me of Lord Eustace's visit to Gentian's Cross.

'He seemed awfully pleased to see me, mothie,' she wrote, in her girlish style of diction, 'and after a little while I think I was rather glad to see him too. It looked so like the dear old Brussels times to see him sitting opposite with his great eyes that you used to be so cross with me for abusing. He asked after you, of course—I would have turned the wretch out of doors if he hadn't—and I told him you had had malaria, and gone to the sea for change of air. He was surprised to find I had grown such a woman—the stupid! as if I should be anything else at my age—and asked me if I thought *he* had grown too. I told him he had grown the wrong way: and indeed he really does look younger than he did in Brussels, mothie. He has shaved off his beard, and it's *such* an improvement. Granny told him I was going to learn to ride; and he said he would come and give me some lessons himself if she liked, and I liked too. I was just about to say I wouldn't have him, when I remembered all my naughtiness in Brussels, and thought I would show you how improved I am. So I bowed and said, "Thanks!

very much!" with quite the tone and air of the Dublin ladies; and granny and he settled it between them, and I believe he's coming to-morrow morning.

'Dearest mother! I'm getting so excited! It wants only two days now to the ball—and then a few stupid parties—and then I shall come to my own, own mother, and never, never, never leave her again for the thousandth part of a minute.'

I smiled over the last enthusiastic sentence, and kissed the dear handwriting fondly. It was balm of Gilead to my weary spirit even whilst I smiled at it. But Juliet was right. My girl was certainly getting over her aversion to our friend; trying hard to like him, as she said, for my sake. Dear, dear child!

If she *did* grow to love him—and if, when we all returned to Ireland together, Eustace and I *should* meet again and renew our interrupted friendship—what might *not* come to pass?

I lay back on my pillows, exhausted with even this slight emotion, and gave myself up to idle, happy dreams, forgetful of all my resolutions, and of the utter want of interest displayed in me or my affairs by Lord Eustace Annerley since we had parted.

The next few days were very exciting ones for us poor exiles by the sad sea waves, for in them we received long accounts from May and Lady Power—accounts which brought the foolish tears to my eyes, because of my inability to join in the scenes which they described—in which we heard of how beautiful my darling had looked at the Drawing-room, and how immensely she had been admired at the ball, and how invitations for different parties were now pouring in upon her from all quarters of Dublin.

'And, amongst others, I have

renewed my acquaintance with the family of Lord Riversdale,' wrote Lady Power to her daughter, 'who are staying in Dublin for the season. The mother has been dead, as you know, for years, but the Earl's daughter, Lady Selina Annerley, does the honours of the house, and May and I dine there next Tuesday week.'

'Next Tuesday week!' I exclaimed in consternation; 'I shall never get my child back at this rate, Juliet. I think Lady Power might be a little more considerate, when she knows how ill I am.'

'Well, I think you could *hardly* have expected May to leave Dublin directly after her presentation, Katie,' was my sister-in-law's reply.

'It is her own wish to come. She is longing to join me.'

'Doubtless, but we can't always do as we wish in this world. For my own part, I felt certain this would be the upshot of her *début*. It would seem almost ridiculous to present a beautiful heiress like Frances publicly to the world, and then immediately send her out of the country before any one has the opportunity to show her any civility.'

'Then I ought to have been told of it before. Her *début* might have been put off till next year.'

'I don't think Frances would have liked that, Katie.'

'She would like to do anything that I asked her to do. She has never disobeyed or neglected me in her life.'

'I am sure she has not. But it does not follow it would not have been a disappointment to her. At all events, she seems to be enjoying herself now. Mamma says she was the life of the room at Lady Claretown's.'

'My darling! How I wish I could see her, if only for a moment,' I said, with weak tears.

'Now, Katie, don't give way.

We shall have the child here now before you are able to enjoy her company; or, if not, we will go back to her, which, after all, will be, I think, the wiser thing to do. It seems such a pity to cut short her first taste of gaiety.'

'I get on so slowly,' I said, with a sigh.

'Oh no, you don't. You can walk across the room quite firmly now to what you did a few days ago. You are getting on famously. I dare say we shall be back at Gentian's Cross by the beginning of July.'

'You are too good to me,' I said, as I kissed her. 'Here am I keeping you from your husband and your children, and the London season, and treating you to all my ill-humoured airs and graces, and you never so much as scold me in return.'

'Don't be a goose, Katie,' replied Juliet, returning my embrace. 'You have nothing to thank me for. You have always been dearer to me than a sister.'

* * * * *

My child's letters still came regularly every morning to brighten my wearisome day, but after her presentation I fancied I detected a slight change in them. They were as affectionate as ever, but they seemed to me more hurried, more reticent, less detailed, than they used to be, and the little difference worried me. Juliet laughed at what she called my ridiculous nonsense, reminding me that May went out oftener, staid up later, and slept longer in the morning probably, than she had ever done in her life before, which was ample explanation (if any were needed) for her sending me shorter and less carefully written letters. Yet I was not quite satisfied. My senses, sharpened by overweening anxiety and affection, felt that although my child

apparently related all that she did, said, and saw, she was keeping back something of greater importance than all the rest. Could it, possibly be that she had become so engrossed and fascinated by the new world she had just entered upon, that she desired to retard rather than hasten the moment of our meeting again? I had made myself delightfully miserable brooding over this idea, which I would not do my own child the wrong of confiding even to Juliet, when the mystery was cleared up in the very last way in the world that I anticipated.

Four weeks had now elapsed since the day of my darling's presentation. Party had succeeded party to prevent her joining me at Hastings, and Lady Power's whole time appeared to be taken up in writing letters to prove how utterly impossible it was that May should leave Dublin for the present; and my heart and soul were growing sick with waiting and longing for her. Still I had complete faith in her ultimate appearance, and hope carried me on from day to day, whispering that by the next post she might be able to fix the time of starting.

I had observed for the last week or ten days that Juliet had received several letters from home the contents of which she had not confided to me, but I knew from her beaming face and cheerful manner that all must be well, and cared for no other news than such as my darling chose to send me.

Four weary, weary weeks, and then came the solution of the mystery.

One morning I received the following note from my daughter:—

'MY OWN SWEET MOTHER,

'I am so excited, I hardly know how to write to you; but of course granny will tell you all

about it, and it shall be exactly as you wish. I know you'll have a good laugh over it, because of Brussels; but I'm not such a fool as I was then, darling, and it's everything to me that you like him. Granny says I'm awfully young; but you were younger, and it was all right, so I don't see why this shouldn't be, too. Only *you* must say so, or it will be all wrong. For, whatever happens, you must always be the *very, very* first person in the world to me, and so I tell him. But I fancy you will be *very pleased*, dearest mothie, and only think I'm not half good enough for your paragon. I shall only wait to get your answer to this before I start for Hastings, for, as I tell granny, this is the very time of all times that I must have my mother with me. Write by return, darling mammy, and don't scold me very much.

'Ever your own loving child,
MAY.

'P.S. It's awfully sudden, isn't it? but granny says it will be a good thing to sober me, and she thinks my head would have been turned if I had gone on much longer as I have done this last month.

'P.P.S. I'm trying to like him very hard, and really I do a little. You should see how awfully polite I am to him when we're alone. Quite sentimental, I assure you.'

I read this letter through four or five times without stopping to think about it, and then I called hastily to my servant.

'Parker, go and ask Mrs. Delancey to come here *at once!* Say I must speak to her—make haste.'

'Nothing wrong at home, I hope, madam.'

'Oh no! no! only see I must Mrs. Delancey.'

Parker flew off on her errand, and, in another minute, Juliet, wreathed in smiles and with her hands full of letters, came into my room.

'Juliet, what is the meaning of this?' I said, as I held out May's letter towards her.

'Hasn't May told you, then?'

'My dear—no! What is it? I can't understand a word of her letter. It's incoherent from beginning to end. Do tell me. What has happened?'

'Nothing but good news, Katie, so don't agitate yourself. You will be as proud as a peacock when you hear it. I was certain it was coming a week ago, but I didn't dare tell you, for fear of the effect a disappointment might have upon you at present. But it's all right now, dear.'

'But what is it? Where is Lady Power's letter? I've never received it!' I exclaimed anxiously.

'I have just brought it you. It was sent in with mine by mistake. Now, Katie, you mustn't tremble so. Prepare yourself for a great surprise. Frances has received a most excellent proposal.'

'A proposal, already?'

'Yes; and one of which you may justly be proud. You cannot but approve of it—it will be the grandest match in the county. And the girl appears to be as pleased as everybody else.'

'But *who*—who is it?' I gasped.

'Can't you guess? You blind little bat! Who but your great Brussels chum—whom you were so sure May didn't like (you silly Katie!)—Lord Eustace Annerley! What do you say to that now?'

I didn't say anything to it. I neither said, nor saw, nor heard anything more. The shock, in my weak state, was too much for me, and I fainted.

(To be continued.)

